

## THE JEWISH ANTICHRIST IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN GERMANY<sup>1</sup>

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### *The Antichrist: What or Who?*

The legend of the Antichrist<sup>2</sup> in its medieval manifestations must seem to modern readers to be the result of pure fantasy, similar to such entertaining motifs as fire-breathing dragons, unicorns, enchantments and the like. The Antichrist was, in our terms, an “imaginary” figure, a product of the collective, historical, theological, mythopoeic functions of the imagination. In our terms; to medieval Christians, the Antichrist was a terrifying reality. Matthew of Janow (1394) wrote that the Antichrist was so universally and thoroughly discussed that when he appeared, even the little children would

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<sup>1</sup> This article grew out of various chapters of my dissertation (University of Arizona, 1993), a revised version of which has been published as *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995). I would like to thank Robin Barnes (Davidson College) and Robert Bast (University of Tennessee) for their helpful comments and suggestions, which provided the impetus and the support necessary for the writing of this article.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on the Antichrist is immense. The term is found in the Epistles of John (1 John 2,18; 2,22; 4,3; and 2 John 1,7), but not in Revelation, the source of all the Biblical details in the Antichrist legend. The word Antichrist has been applied to the Beast of Revelation 13. The classic work of Wilhelm Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend, a Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore*, trans. by A.H. Keane (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1896) is still useful as a scholarly introduction. An unsurpassed study of the Antichrist legend in late medieval and Reformation era Germany is Hans Preuß' classic *Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist im späteren Mittelalter, bei Luther und in der konfessionellen Polemik. Ein Beitrag zur Theologie Luthers und zur Geschichte der christlichen Frömmigkeit* (Leipzig, 1906). In the best tradition of thorough German scholarship, Horst Dieter Rauh promises much less in the title than he actually delivers, namely a vast and extraordinarily erudite conspectus of the Antichrist tradition since Biblical times: *Das Bild des Antichrist im Mittelalter: Von Tyconius zum deutschen Symbolismus* (Münster, 1979<sup>2</sup> [1973]). Less technical, though every bit as scholarly and much broader in scope is Richard Kenneth Emmerson's *Antichrist in the Middle Ages. A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981). For a short overview of the association between the Antichrist and the Jews, see Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983<sup>2</sup> [1943]), ch. 2, “Antichrist,” 32-43. Trachtenberg does not distinguish between the cautious Biblicism of much medieval “high theology” and the more concrete exegesis that eventually prevailed in exegetical and literary works of the high and later Middle Ages. For a perspective on the “real-life” impact of the Antichrist in the political world, see H.M. Schaller, “Endzeit-Erwartungen. See also Bernard McGinn, “Portraying Antichrist in the Middle Ages,” in: *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. Werner Verbeke, Daniel Verhelst and Andries Welkenhuysen (Louvain, 1988), 1-48.

know him instantly.<sup>3</sup> Over one hundred years later, John Calvin was concerned above all to depict the ideas and concerns of "old believers" in the Catholic world as blind and superstitious when he wrote "in the papacy [*in papatu*] nothing is more widely and commonly discussed than the projected coming of the Antichrist."<sup>4</sup>

The pre-Christian Jewish tradition, based in part on Daniel (7,7-10), foresaw the advent of an anti-Messiah, known first as Belial or Beliar, and later as Armillus.<sup>5</sup> This was to be an actual physical entity. However, from the time of the Church Fathers, learned Biblical exegesis has tended to interpret the Beast of Revelation 13, the basis of the (Christian) Antichrist legend, as a corporate entity: the totality and final sum of evil in the world. Nevertheless, many medieval and early modern authors who wrote in Latin were less concerned with precise Biblical scholarship than with Christian tradition. The term "Antichrist," drawn from the Epistle of John, and fraught with the earlier tradition of the Jewish anti-Messiah, denotes both someone who opposes or does not believe in Jesus and one of the personnel of the Last Days.<sup>6</sup> This shocking name was applied to the Beast of Revelation 13, thus anthropomorphizing the Beast and giving him a "speaking part" in the final drama. The vernacular sources that interpreted learned theology for the non-Latinate, primarily in literary and exegetical genres, provide evidence for a popular image of Antichrist strikingly different from that of the learned. On the European Continent, the broad masses of western Christendom as well as many learned clerks believed the Antichrist was a real person who would be born, live and die, often in a perverse parody of Jesus' life, at the End of Time.<sup>7</sup> He would persecute true believers and set up an

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 39. To medieval Christians, the Antichrist was "no legendary dragon spouting imaginary fire; he was a terrifying reality" (37-38); "... the Antichrist was no mere creature of scholarly dispute but the deeply disturbing concern of everyone." (39).

<sup>4</sup> "... in papatu nihil magis celebre ac tritum est, quam futurus Antichristi adventus: interea tam sunt stupidi, ut eius tyranidem cervicibus suis impositam non sentiant." John Calvin, *Commentary on 1 John 2,18*, in: *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. W. Baum *et al.* (Brunswick, 1896), LV, 321.

<sup>5</sup> See Wilhelm Bousset's article "Antichrist" in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (London, 1908), vol. I, 578-581.

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 2,18: "Little children, it is the last time: as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby ye know it is the last time."

<sup>7</sup> The situation in England seems to have been rather different. Lollard exegesis tended to see the Antichrist as the pope. Curtis Bostick notes that this is the result of a similar distinction between a corporate and a personal Antichrist: see his dissertation "The Antichrist and the 'trewe men.'" Lollard Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Early Modern England" (University of Arizona, 1993). Bostick notes that the theologians Tyndale and Wyclif generally saw the Antichrist as a corporate entity, whereas at the popular level, the Lollards interpreted Antichrist as a real person, usually the pope. Most students of the Antichrist traditions have not paid equal attention to both views: Emerson, for example, calls the personal inter-

ungodly realm of terror on earth, which would last until Christ's return and the last judgement. From a very early date, Christian theologians found it easy to identify the Antichrist with the Jewish Messiah.<sup>8</sup> Christians came to see in the Antichrist they expected at the End of Time the figure the Jews believed would be their Messiah. Beginning in the twelfth century, vernacular literary and exegetical texts express the idea that the despised Jews would play a major role as the servants, supporters and troops of the Antichrist (whom they would see as the Messiah) when he came to devastate Christendom. This suggests that an anti-Semitism in which religious hostility played a part, but not the central role, was a key factor in medieval perceptions and depictions of Jews. At least one version of this hostile story has survived and left its mark on the modern world.<sup>9</sup>

Most recent commentators on the medieval legend of the Antichrist have failed if not to notice, then at least to pay sufficient attention to two central issues. The first is the popular Christian belief that the Antichrist (a real man) would be identical with the Messiah awaited by the Jews; the second is the intimate but hostile relationship (*Intimfeindschaft*) expressed by the drafting of Jews into Antichrist narratives based on Christian apocalyptic hopes and fears.<sup>10</sup> In his exhaustive study of Antichrist in medieval theology and

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pretation "a standard and widely accepted understanding of Antichrist" (*Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 7); the main alternative to this view, he suggests, is the *political* interpretation, which from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries identified the Antichrist with a specific pope, political figure, opponent, heretic or reformer, a view that was to prevail in the sixteenth century with the Protestants, who understood the entire Roman Catholic church as Antichrist (*idem*). Yet the identification of the *papacy* with Antichrist was both a political move and a Bible-centered exegesis. My study shows that there is a real distinction between the allegorizing or symbolic view characteristic of high theology and the personal view that indeed did win out and become "standard and widely accepted" among the majority of western Christians. In fact, both these ancient traditions were necessary for the identification of specific personages (a pope or an emperor, usually) with the Antichrist whether by Lollards or by Luther. Whether the identification of the Antichrist with the pope is more "political" than identifying him with the Messiah awaited by the Jews (clearly not the pope!) would lead us beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory the Great (604) declares that the Jews, having rejected Christ, look for the coming of another Messiah: "... for Christ they await Antichrist." Cited by Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 91, from Gregory, *Moralium*, 36.24.43, PL 76,597. Cf. 1 John 2,22: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is the antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."

<sup>9</sup> Trachtenberg notes that the origins of the anti-Semitic classic and bestseller, the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, can be traced to the medieval Antichrist legend. The link between the Antichrist legend and the notion of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy can be found in a Russian publication of 1905, *The Great in the Little and Antichrist as a New Political Possibility*, which foresaw the imminent imposition of the reign of Antichrist through his Jewish agents. Trachtenberg cites John S. Curtiss, *An Appraisal of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (New York, 1942). See Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 223-4, note 1.

<sup>10</sup> Trachtenberg's excellent analytic survey does not address these topics; while Norman Cohn devotes a scant page-and-a-half to the Antichrist as the apocalyptic destroyer in his classic *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*

literature, R.K. Emmerson notes in various places the many instances in which Jews are described as the followers of Antichrist as well as the powerful exegetical tradition that makes of the Biblical Beast a descendant of the (Jewish) tribe of Dan. However, he does not isolate or comment explicitly on the popular connection between Antichrist and his putative Jewish henchmen; nor does he pay much attention to the related confusion of Antichrist with the Messiah awaited by the Jews. In general terms, the history of the Antichrist legend among the common people has received very little attention from scholars. This article will examine the learned, semi-learned and popular Antichrist traditions in late-antique and medieval western Europe, then focus on popular (mostly vernacular) sources concerning the Antichrist in late-medieval and early modern Germany, where this legend retained its broad appeal and popular form until the time of the Reformation at least. Both the basic rift and the many continuities between high theology and popular belief concerning the Antichrist will be explored.

The Antichrist figure is an amalgam of "myth, popular folklore, and current history" that seems to have developed parallel to the efflorescent Christology of the early Church.<sup>11</sup> The Antichrist conceived of in human terms, along the lines of Christ's incarnation, is an anthropomorphic and concrete interpretation of the "Beast" of the Johannine Apocalypse (Rev. 13).<sup>12</sup>

One of the earliest witnesses to this belief is the fourth-century Tiburtine Sibyl, a Latin translation of a Greek prophecy. This Christianized apoca-

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(New York: Oxford University Press, 1970<sup>2</sup> [1957]), 77-79. Gavin Langmuir's study *History, Religion and Antisemitism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990) addresses a very different set of higher-order theological and social issues. Salo W. Baron, in his *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967<sup>2</sup>), vol. XI, 131-133 and notes, 346-349, notes Christian mirroring of the Antichrist in the Jewish Messiah, but neglects the larger issue of apocalypticism, without which this legend makes little sense.

<sup>11</sup> This suggestion is made by Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End. Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 16-17. Klaus Aichele, in *Das Antichristdrama des Mittelalters, der Reformation und der Gegenreformation* (The Hague, 1974), writes: "Die Antichristmythologie ist [...] ein Produkt der populärtheologischen Überlieferung, die strenge Theologie hat den Stoff vermieden oder geschichtlich-theologisch-eschatologisch stilisiert." (15). This strict division between popular and learned theology is facile and does not address the significant Latin tradition in which the Antichrist appeared as a real person, nor does it take into account communication between various levels of theology: Latin "high" theology, more popular Latin theology and vernacular exegetical works.

<sup>12</sup> For precise details and a listing of testimony from the early Fathers of the Church including Jerome, Hippolytus, Lactantius and Chrysostom, most of whom tend to see the Antichrist as a human being possessed or energized by the Devil, or as the Devil incarnate, see Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 133-135 and 137-142. Bousset expands on the origins of the Antichrist legend in ancient (Hebrew) tales of a repeat of God's primeval battle with the Dragon of the depths, the marine monster (Leviathan): "The expectation [in the Jewish myth of the final battle] is not of any hostile ruler and of the oppression of Israel by him and his army, but of a struggle of Satan directly with God, of a conflict of the Dragon with the Almighty throned in heaven. To me the Antichrist legend seems a simple incarnation of that old Dragon myth, which has in the first instance nothing to do with particular political powers and occurrences.

lyptic text was based in part on the earlier Sibyllines, though firmly anchored in Patristic apocalyptic. This text interprets the Christian apocalypse of John through pagan oracular traditions mediated by Jewish apocalyptic thought.<sup>13</sup> The medieval church accorded the Sibylline texts an almost canonical status as the “prophets” of classical antiquity.<sup>14</sup>

The oldest surviving version of the Latin Tiburtine Sibyl is an early eleventh-century Latin reworking, probably from northern Italy.<sup>15</sup> The popularity of this text is attested to by its complicated and far-flung history. The text edited by Ernst Sackur was influenced by the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius (7th century), though the details concerning Antichrist are not identical.

The Latin Tiburtine Sibyl stands at the head of a long line of apocalyptic traditions that depicted the Antichrist as a false Messiah: a Jewish Antichrist will be born of the tribe of Dan to reign as a false prophet and false Messiah from a rebuilt Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> The salient elements of the “Jewish Antichrist” tradition are already present in the Latin Tiburtine Sibyl, which

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For the dragon is substituted the man armed with miraculous powers who makes himself God's equal a man who in the eyes of the Jews could be no other than the false [!] Messiah.” Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 144-145. Bousset's use of the word “false” in an unexpected place must be accidental. He admits that the medieval myth emphasized the human and “political” aspects of the Antichrist, but insists on the demonic nature of the Antichrist as the “dragon” of Revelation, a motif that would be used to great effect in the antipapal pamphlets of the Protestant Reformation.

<sup>13</sup> Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 95-117; esp. 112. See also McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 19-21; McGinn cites Philipp Vielhauer: “Christianity took over the genre of the Apocalypse from Palestinian Judaism and that of the Sibyllines from Hellenistic Judaism,” from “Apocalypses and Related Subjects: Introduction,” in: E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 581-607; 581. For precise details on the “proto-Antichrist” figure Belial or Beliar, the “man of sin” known to St. Paul (2 Cor. 6,15) from the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, see Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 136-137, and his “Note on Belial,” 153-156. Rauh provides a close look at the original political context of the Sibylline texts and their subsequent use as “instruments of politics” (e.g., the description of Emperor Henry IV by a Gregorian monk, between 1084 and 1096 as an antichrist-like king, with whom the horrifying End Time will begin): *Das Bild des Antichrist*, 138-145; esp. 143.

<sup>14</sup> The medieval formula “teste David cum Sibylla” (with the witness of David and the Sibyl) was a guarantee of double ancient authority: McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 20. Emmerson notes that during the Middle Ages the Sibylline Oracles, whether Christian in origin or not, were often considered inspired: *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 47.

<sup>15</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 43. McGinn cites the reconstruction of the widespread tradition, including two families of Latin texts, done by P.J. Alexander, *The Oracle of Baalbek: The Tiburtine Sibyl in Greek Dress* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), and reproduces the stemma on p. 295. The Latin text edited by Ernst Sackur (W<sup>1</sup>) is an early eleventh-century copy of the lost late tenth-century W<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 32-34; McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 17. According to Trachtenberg, the idea that the Antichrist will be born of the tribe of Dan “is unquestionably related to the Jewish conception that the Messiah would be derived from this tribe on the maternal side” (note 5 to chapter 2, pages 224-225). Emmerson notes that this idea, found first in the Tiburtine Sibyl, was based on Gen. 49,16-17, Deut. 33,22, and Jer. 8,16; indeed,

describes the "Son of Perdition" as born of the "tribe of Dan" (one of the ten lost tribes).<sup>17</sup> Where Jeremiah predicted that the Jews would be punished for preferring Baal to their God (9,14-16), Jerome identified Baal with Antichrist and suggested that the Jews would be punished because of their preference for Antichrist.<sup>18</sup> Jewish and Christian apocalyptic parted ways here, mirroring the deepening rift during the late Empire between the "New Israel" and the "old."

The Jewish connection was one important strand of the Antichrist tradition. Once the story of Antichrist had assimilated other apocalyptic tales, such as that concerning "Gog and Magog enclosed by Alexander,"<sup>19</sup> there was little reason to insist on precise faithfulness to Scripture. The "Syriac Legend Concerning Alexander" is the first instance of the fusion, which was to be characteristic for the Middle Ages as a whole, of the Alexander legend and late classical apocalypticism. A Latin translation of the Syriac original was made in the tenth century by a Neapolitan priest.<sup>20</sup> The relevant passage is as follows:

Then the hosts of Agog and of the house of Magog shall go forth,/And man shall fall upon his fellow, and nation upon nation,/And the quaking of the earth and the sword of anger shall be there./On the skirts of Zion shall the bodies of the dead lie in heaps./And after these things the earth shall be desolated of mankind,/Villages shall be destroyed and all towns and cities;/The scattered ones I only remain in the earth as a remnant./Then shall Antichrist rise upon the whole earth . . .<sup>21</sup>

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all the main elements that came to be associated with the Antichrist's appearance in the last days were drawn, sometimes through very distorting filters, from the Bible: *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 46. On the parentage and birth of the Antichrist, see Emmerson's summary of the various traditions, *ibid.*, 79-83.

<sup>17</sup> The relevant passage from the Tiburtine Latin Sibyl is in Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 49-50. Trachtenberg attempts to make a distinction not borne out by the sources when he claims that the Antichrist legend, "as distinct from the simple belief in the coming of this figure, is of comparatively late origin"; i.e., the tenth century: *The Devil and the Jews*, 32. The fourth-century text cited and translated by McGinn already contains all the main elements of what he calls the Antichrist legend.

<sup>18</sup> Suggesting that the Antichrist was a "Baal," an idol for whom the Jews would forsake the God of Israel. Jerome, *In Hieremiam prophetam*, 2.78,2, CChr LXXIV.97. See also the *Glossa ordinaria: Biblia sacra cum glossis interlineari, et ordinaria, Nicolai Lyrani postilla, ac moralitalibus, Burgensis additionibus et Thoringi replicis*, 7 vols. (Venice, 1588), vol. 4, fol. 125r (cited from Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, note 26 to chapter 2, 253).

<sup>19</sup> The story of Alexander enclosing Gog and Magog in a mountain fastness had been added to the narrative of the Antichrist story in the fifth-century "Syrian Legend Concerning Alexander."

<sup>20</sup> Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, p. 11. The most complete version is that ascribed to the Syrian ecclesiastic writer Jacob of Serugh (c. 451-521). E.A. Wallis Budge edited the Syriac text and translated it into English in his *The History of Alexander the Great*. McGinn reproduces a portion of this text in *Visions of the End*, 57-59.

<sup>21</sup> *Visions of the End*, 59, lines 647-654. For a brief contextual discussion, see Andrew Runni Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1932), 26-28.

It was not a stretch to see in the apocalyptic destroyers Gog and Magog another mysterious people, the Jewish Ten Tribes. To the best of my knowledge, this identification occurred for the first time in the work of the Parisian schoolman Peter Comestor (ca. 1110 to 1179), who confused the Ten Tribes of Israel with the apocalyptic destroyers Gog and Magog in his *Historia Scholastica* (written between 1169 and 1173).<sup>22</sup> The very few academic commentators who attempted to maintain Biblical and historical distinctions between these two legendary peoples had little success in persuading the broad public. In the German-speaking lands, the post-Comestorine version of the Gog and Magog story not only equated the destroyers with the Jewish Ten Tribes; it used a special middle High German term of opprobrium to designate and label them as evil: the Red Jews.<sup>23</sup> The Red Jews would be the first and foremost servants of the Antichrist. The Antichrist's Jewishness provided a convenient point of reference for later Christian depictions of the apocalyptic destroyers as Jews (whether the Ten Tribes or the Red Jews).<sup>24</sup>

The seventh-century *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius were, after the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of John, one of the most influential and widespread of medieval apocalyptic texts.<sup>25</sup> The *Revelations* also fuse the ancient story of Alexander enclosing the "unclean peoples" (among whom Gog and Magog are numbered) behind bronze gates in the northern mountains with the Antichrist legend. First, the "unclean peoples" break out of their mountainous prison and sweep through the world, killing and eating human beings

<sup>22</sup> See James H. Morey, "Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase, and the Medieval Popular Bible," in: *Speculum* 68,1 (1993), 6-35, for a thorough discussion of the popularity, sources and reception of the *Historia*. Morey notes that the *Historia*, "one of the most popular books in the late Middle Ages" (8), has received no critical edition or major study and has been neglected in the standard works on scholastic study of the Bible (e.g., Beryl Smalley's *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (3rd ed., Oxford, at the University Press, 1983), which concentrates on Stephen Langton and Peter the Chanter, in the chapter "Masters of the Sacred Page," 196-263), but qualifies this assertion with the information that Comestor's "influence on medieval vernacular religious literature was more significant than either Langton's or Peter the Chanter's" (8). The many early translations into the European vernaculars prove the point: a Saxon version, the first of the German Historiated Bibles, was made c. 1248, by order of Heinrich Raspe, landgrave of Thuringia; Jacob van Maerlant produced the Dutch *Rijmbijbel* in c. 1271; the French *Bible historiale* of Guyart Desmoulins dates to c. 1295; and Portuguese and Czech translations were made in the fourteenth century (Morey, "Peter Comestor," 8).

<sup>23</sup> See Andrew Colin Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age, 1200-1600* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> Trachtenberg is one of the very few modern commentators on the Antichrist and the Jews who has noticed the Red Jews and correctly placed them in the context of the apocalyptic peoples enclosed by Alexander who will serve the Antichrist. However, he cites only one source, otherwise relying for the rich and largely unknown medieval tradition on the not-entirely-accurate reporting of Preuß, *Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist*, 17 and 18, note 1: *The Devil and the Jews*, 39-40.

<sup>25</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 70. Again, Trachtenberg does not cite this extraordinarily influential tradition, which is one of the main vehicles of the Antichrist legend in the Middle Ages.

and terrifying the whole world. When the Antichrist has arisen, the king of the Romans will give up his crown on Golgotha and hand over the kingdom of the Christians to God. All political organisation and power (i.e., all protection against enemies) will disappear, and the world will be given over entirely to the Antichrist, the Son of Perdition.<sup>26</sup>

The ancient tradition represented by the Latin Tiburtine Sibyl was decisive for medieval visions of the end. Hrabanus Maurus (c. 776-856), Archbishop of Mainz, summed it up in the ninth century, adding what would be the standard Christian view of the Jewish Messiah for centuries to come: "The Jews dream of the coming of their Christ, whom we know to be the Antichrist."<sup>27</sup>

A ninth-century Latin lyric neatly compressed the essential elements of the ancient tradition into a few lines:

Antichristus est venturus permitente domino  
In Babilonia nascetur conceptus de diabolo  
Dan de tribu erit ortus ex Ebreorum populo.<sup>28</sup>

The *Letter on the Antichrist* of the abbot Adso (910-992), composed around 950, was a compilation based largely on early medieval summaries of patristic teaching on the Antichrist.<sup>29</sup> The *Letter* is modeled on a typical saint's

<sup>26</sup> In McGinn's translation: "After a week of years, when they [sc. Gog and Magog *et al.*] have already captured the city of Joppa, the Lord will send one of the princes of his host and strike them down in a moment. After this, the king of the Romans will go down and live in Jerusalem for seven and half-seven times [i.e., years]. When the ten and a half years are completed the Son of Perdition will appear. He will be born in Chorazaim, nourished in Bethsaida, and reign in Capharnaum. Chorazaim will rejoice because he was born in her, and Capharnaum because he will have reigned in her. For this reason in the third Gospel the Lord gave the following statement: "Woe to you Chorozaïm, woe to you Bethsaida, and to you Capharnaum if you have risen up to heaven, you will descend even to hell" (Luke 10,13-15). When the Son of Perdition has arisen, the king of the Romans will ascend Golgotha upon which the wood of the Holy Cross is fixed, in the place where the Lord underwent death for us. The king will take the crown from his head and place it on the cross and stretching out his hands to heaven will hand over the kingdom of the Christians to God the Father. The cross and the crown of the king will be taken up to heaven. [...] When the Cross has been lifted up on high to heaven, the king of the Romans will directly give up his spirit. Then every principality and power will be destroyed that the Son of Perdition may be manifest." McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 76.

<sup>27</sup> Cited by Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, note 2 to chapter 2, page 224, from Friedrich Murawski, *Die Juden bei den Kirchenvätern und Scholastikern* (Berlin, 1925), 36.

<sup>28</sup> "The Antichrist will arrive when God decrees. He will be born in Babylon, having been conceived by the Devil. He will be descended from the tribe of Dan, of the Hebrew people." Cited by Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 83, from "Quique cupitis audire," in: *Poetarum Latinorum Medii Aevi*, 4.1: *Rhythmi aevi Merovingici et Carolini*, MGH (Berlin, 1914), no. 88, stanza 2.

<sup>29</sup> For a brief treatment of Adso's letter, see Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist*, 153-164. The standard work on Adso is by Robert Konrad, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi. Antichrist-vorstellung und Geschichtsbild im des Abtes Adso von Montier-en-Der* (Kallmünz, 1964). See also McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 82-83.



life. Unlike the tradition founded by Tyconius in which the Antichrist is conceived of in corporate terms as consisting of enemies of the Church,<sup>30</sup> and which also draws heavily on Jerome and Augustine, the thrust of Adso's *Letter* is personal and historical, not collective and moralizing.<sup>31</sup> Relying on the exegesis of 2 Thess. 2,4 by Haimo of Auxerre (865/866),<sup>32</sup> which Adso copied nearly word-for-word, the abbot states that the Son of Perdition is neither a heathen nor a Christian, but a Jew, and not just any Jew, but the false Messiah. He circumcises himself and claims to be the Christ promised to the Jews; they, thinking to receive the Messiah, receive the Devil instead.<sup>33</sup>

Although Adso did not know the Tiburtine Sibyl, he was familiar with the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius, in which the Antichrist was also depicted as an individual. Adso "westernized" the myth for local, west Frankish consumption, substituting for the "king of the Romans" or "emperor of the Romans and Greeks" the "rex Francorum" (his patron). These elements of Adso's version of the legend, repeated and spread by a rich manuscript tradition, helped shape the later history of Western thought concerning the Antichrist.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, the association of the Antichrist with the peoples enclosed by Alexander was firmly fixed in Christian consciousness in late antiquity. Given the belief that the Antichrist would be born of Jewish lineage, the stage was set for Comestor's identification of the nations enclosed by Alexander with the Ten Tribes.<sup>35</sup> An exegetical triangle, of which each element confirms and authenticates the other two, thus came into being and dominated medieval

<sup>30</sup> I.e., heretics or even Jews, or more specifically, the Devil himself (this was the common interpretation in the centuries from 500-900 C.E.): see Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist im Mittelalter*, *passim*.

<sup>31</sup> The exegetical method of Tyconius (fourth century) was the foundation of the spiritual, as opposed to the "carnal" (i.e., literal) understanding of Scripture, esp. the Hebrew Bible (in which he interpreted even the most obscure passages as *figurae* of the Church): see Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist*, 102-121.

<sup>32</sup> Long confused with Haimo, bishop of Halberstadt (853), Haimo was a monk of Saint-Germain-d'Auxerre. His Revelation commentary ("Expositio in Apocalypsim," *PL* CXVII.937-1220) was influenced by Ambrosius Autpertus (778); the *Glossa ordinaria* drew on Haimo. See the article by Henri Barré, "Haymon d'Auxerre," in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique* VII (Paris: Beauchesne, 1969), part I, col. 91-97.

<sup>33</sup> Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist*, 161; Sackur's edition of the "Libellus de ortu et de tempore Antichristi," 111; *PL* CI.1295d-1296a; cf. Haimo, *PL* CXVII.779d-780b.

<sup>34</sup> The eleventh and twelfth centuries produced at least seven different Latin versions of Adso's *Letter*: McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 84. The text of Adso's *Letter* has been edited by Ernst Sackur, "Epistola Adonis ad Gerbergam reginam de ortu et tempore Antichristi," in: *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen*, 97-113, and by D. Verhelst, ed., *Adso Dervensis: De Ortu et Tempore Antichristi*, CChrCM XLV. See McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 84-87, for the relevant passages in his translation.

<sup>35</sup> This association is noted by Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 102-103 but he does not mention the main medieval texts that developed, communicated or made credible this central feature of medieval apocalypticism. See Gow, *The Red Jews*, chapter III.

ideas concerning the *dramatis personae* of the End Times: the (Jewish) Antichrist will be accompanied by the savage "unclean nations/Gog and Magog enclosed by Alexander," who are, according to Comestor's hostile association, the (Jewish) Ten Tribes.

The authors of the mainly vernacular late-medieval and early-modern visions of the Antichrist that are the focus of this enquiry brook are not overly concerned with faithfulness to Scripture in their exegetical narratives, nor are they interested in symbolic or allegorical explanations of Gog and Magog as the "body," mystical or otherwise, of Antichrist. Here, in the tradition of the Tiburtine Sibyl, echoed by Adso and many others among the ranks of both the Latinate and the illiterate, the Antichrist is an historical person who will live, preach and reign on earth in a parody of Christ's human existence. This version, not the spiritualizing allegory of high theology, was picked up by the popular printing presses of the fifteenth century.<sup>36</sup> The Antichrist is a concrete individual who will interact with people on earth. Some will support him: the "unclean peoples," Gog and Magog, the Jews, the "Ten Tribes enclosed by Alexander," the Red Jews, and the mass of unfortunates whom he "deceives" and signs with his "mark." His enemies are those who resist him, the few believers, the remnant of Israel, Enoch and Elijah, the archangel Michael, or Christ himself. Dramatic scenes, not *quaestiones* and *distinctiones*, form the basic unit of this tale.<sup>37</sup>

To most medieval Christians, the stage was a suitable place to depict religious events, even theological principles. The spectacular elements of the more "literal" Antichrist tradition made for excellent drama. Klaus Aichele and Hans-Peter Kursawa have dedicated monographs to the Antichrist legend in dramatic and literary works, respectively.<sup>38</sup> Although both see the in-

<sup>36</sup> This tradition, which Emerson calls "standard and widely accepted," is but one of many views; the sixteenth-century Reformers would reject it entirely (see Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 204-237; esp. 215). Yet the concrete interpretation does merit particular attention. It figures not only in the fifteenth-century *Antichrist* books, but also in the first printed edition of the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius (Cologne, 1475) and in Wolfgang Aytlinger's Commentary on the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius (Johannes Froschauer published the first edition in 1496; Sebastian Brant produced an illustrated version in 1498 that had gone through seven more printings by 1576). The personal view co-existed with the Reformers' more political interpretation for many years.

<sup>37</sup> Such scenes are not limited to dramatic art. Pictorial art also represented the Antichrist as a concrete person supported by the Jews. In his dissertation "The Iconography of Antisemitism: A Study of the Representation of the Jews in the Visual Arts of Europe 1400-1600," 2 vols. (New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, 1973; available from University Microfilms International), Eric Zafran refers to illustrated medieval versions of the Book of Revelation in which "the Satanic manifestations or their adherents could be portrayed with the hats or badge characteristic of the Jews" (25). However, Zafran fails to place these works even within a particular century and cites only his source, Ulysse Robert's *Les Signes d'infamie au moyen âge* (Paris, 1891), 104.

<sup>38</sup> Aichele, *Das Antichristdrama*. Aichele notes that in most Antichrist-dramas, the Jews are

herent hostility to Jews in a story that makes the Antichrist into the Jewish Messiah, neither Aichele nor Kursawa pays sufficient attention to the many other genres in which the same story occurs, e.g., in the realm of learned theology or in vernacular works of popular exegesis. Each thus limits his perspective to a single literary genre. Accordingly, their conclusions are quite limited in scope and fail to recognize a) the broad appeal and significance of this legend at all social and intellectual levels; and b) the intimate connection, in vernacular and Latin works, in exegesis and in literature, between apocalypticism and anti-Semitism.

Winfried Frey has suggested that a gradual change in Christian views of the Jewish role in the End Time occurred between the putatively "less anti-Semitic" twelfth century and the "more anti-Semitic" sixteenth century. From necessary participants in the final conversion to Christ, the Jews came to be seen as servants and supporters of the Antichrist.<sup>39</sup> The evidence cited for the twelfth century certainly supports part of this argument: the popular Tegernsee *Ludus paschali de adventu et interitu Antichristi* (mid-twelfth century) was addressed to and reached a fairly broad audience, even including women, though as a Latin play it was nominally addressed to the clergy.<sup>40</sup> This well-

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the first and foremost supporters of Antichrist, in whom they see their long-awaited Messiah (140-148; esp. 142 and 147). Kursawa focuses on the German literature of the Middle Ages in his published doctoral dissertation *Antichristsage, Weltende und Jüngstes Gericht in mittelalterlicher deutscher Dichtung* (University of Cologne, 1976). His conclusions are similar.

<sup>39</sup> Selma Stern-Täubler, "Die Vorstellung vom Juden und vom Judentum in der Ideologie der Reformationszeit," in: *Essays presented to Leo Baeck on the occasion of his eightieth birthday* (London: East and West Library, 1954), 194-211; 207-208. A completely new understanding of "the Jew" in the fifteenth century made Jews into apocalyptic figures who participated in the Final Things in a sinister fashion: they were "schuld am Weltuntergang." This development functions as the background to the treatment of the Jews during the Reformation era. A longer-term view is available from Klaus Geissler's lengthy discussion "Die Juden in mittelalterlichen Texten Deutschlands," in: *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* 38,1 (1975), 163-226. Winfried Frey has made a more focussed contribution to the field in his article "Gottesmörder und Menschenfeinde," 44. The first to suggest this development, Trachtenberg cites the "thirteenth-century" (sic: twelfth-century) Latin original of the medieval Antichrist plays, the Tegernsee *Ludus paschalis de adventu et interitu Antichristi*, which accords the Jews "a somewhat incidental role," since they convert only after the Antichrist has made large conquests; but later German and French versions, "following the popular disposition, display the Jews as prime movers in the drama": *The Devil and the Jews*, 36.

<sup>40</sup> Karl Langosch, ed., *Geistliche Spiele, Lateinische Dramen des Mittelalters mit deutschen Versen* (Darmstadt, 1957), 179-241. Rauh describes the origins and context of this play at length in an entire chapter, 365-415. Rauh dates the work to the period between 1155 and 1161 (369). The play was well-known by 1161 or 1162, and was staged in southern German monasteries and perhaps even parish churches, as attested to by Gerhoh von Reichersberg's condemnation of clerics who, instead of devoting themselves to divine service, prefer to watch idle plays: "adeo ut ecclesias ipsas, videlicet orationum domus, in theatra commutent ac mimicis ludorum spectaculus impleant. Inter quae nimirum spectacula, astantibus ac spectantibus ipsorum feminis, interdum et Antichristi" (cited by Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist*, 368, from Gerhoh von Reichersberg, *De investigatione Antichristi libri III*, ed. F. Scheibelberger [Linz, 1875]; *MGH Libelli*

known and much-imitated work has been called "the best literary product of German ecclesiastical life in the twelfth century."<sup>41</sup> It borrowed from Adso, the Pseudo-Methodius, the Vulgate and the liturgy, but it shows no signs of a particularly anti-Semitic attitude. Only after he has conquered the Greeks, the French, the Germans, and finally the King of Babylon does the Antichrist send his apostles to the Jews to persuade them that he is their Messiah. The Jews are briefly deceived by the Antichrist, but convert to Christ after hearing the voice of the prophets.<sup>42</sup> In the tradition of Otto of Freising,<sup>43</sup> the *Ludus de Antichristo* entirely lacks the "Adsonian" motives that characterize the Antichrist as Jewish: his descent from the tribe of Dan, his circumcision, or the reconstruction of the Temple at Jerusalem. The play steers clear of all anti-Jewish polemic. Jerusalem is displaced in a rather Augustinian moment by the "Great City," the *civitas diaboli* (city of the Devil), as the "home" of the Antichrist.<sup>44</sup> The Synagogue is treated with dignity, indeed the Jews are cast as Antichrist's victims when after hearing Enoch and Elijah, they declare:

Seducti fuimus vere per Antichristum,  
Qui mentitur esse se Judeorum Christum.<sup>45</sup>

The Latin ecclesiastical drama of this period is characterized by a singular consciousness that the Jews are necessary to the action and history of

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de lite III, ed. Ernst Sackur [1897], 305-395; I,5). Emerson examines the play in considerable detail (*Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 166-172). Recent editions of the play are Gerhard Günther's *Der Antichrist: Der staufische Ludus de Antichristo* (Hamburg, 1970), including an extensive commentary, and a translation by John Wright, *The Play of Antichrist* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1967).

<sup>41</sup> Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), vol. 2, 395.

<sup>42</sup> Geissler, "Juden in mittelalterlichen Texten," 203. Geissler notes that this text is also eminently political, "the apotheosis of the imperial idea of the Staufen emperors" (202-203). Here we find the non-Tyconian position taken in the *Elucidarium* of Honorius Augustodunensis (after 1137) by the writer (or interpolator) of the passage on the Antichrist: the Antichrist is seen in "medieval" terms as a human being, a tyrant, the Jewish false Messiah around whom the people of Israel will gather from all over the world. However, Enoch and Elijah will convert the Jews to Christianity: Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist*, 253-254; 255, citing the *Elucidarium* III,10 (Pl. CLXXVII.1163c-d; ed. Y. Lefèvre, *L'Elucidarium et les Lucidaires* (Paris, 1954), 359-477; 453). The relatively mild tone of the Tegernsee *Antichrist*-play is in stark contrast to a contemporaneous poem by Walter of Châtillon. Here, the Antichrist speaks: "Miseranter miseror miseros Hebreos,/Qui verbis et opere se fatentur mcos;/Exspectant, ut veniam et reducam eos/Et rursus restituam Judea Judeos." (Cited by Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist*, 406, from *Walther von Châtillon, Moralsch-satirische Gedichte*, ed. K. Strecker [Heidelberg, 1929], 142, Song XVI,12).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Rauh's chapter on Otto (c. 1114-1158), the "master of medieval world chronicles and the leading historian of German Symbolism" covers pages 302-365. So far as Otto was concerned, the Antichrist would deceive both Christians and Jews: *Das Bild des Antichrist*, 354.

<sup>44</sup> Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist*, 406-407.

<sup>45</sup> "We were deceived by the Antichrist/Who lied, saying he was the Christ [Messiah] of the Jews": Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist*, 408, citing the *Ludus de Antichristo* II,8 (Langosch 234).

salvation, and that they will convert at the end.<sup>46</sup> However, the middle High German (and middle French) versions of this material would cast the Jews as evil apocalyptic destroyers, especially in the period after the Black Death.<sup>47</sup>

From the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, Antichrist plays depicted Jews not as the last, temporary subjects of the Antichrist, but as his first and foremost adherents.<sup>48</sup> The surviving directions for the fourteenth-century Frankfurt Passion Play betray a slightly different emphasis,<sup>49</sup> but the

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Rauh cites E.A.F. Michaelis' intriguing idea that the "positive" view of the Synagogue is due to the influence of Bernard of Clairvaux, who intervened energetically against the persecution of the Jews, esp. in the Rhineland, at the time of the Second Crusade: "Zum Ludus de Antichristo," in: *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 54 (1913), 61-87; 83.

<sup>46</sup> Geissler, "Juden in mittelalterlichen Texten," 199-202. Geissler also maintains that courtly literature often shows a relatively tolerant, "polite" attitude toward Jews (esp. the work of Wolfram von Eschenbach: 194-199), whereas the poets of the "early bourgeoisie" start in the thirteenth century to take a tougher stand based on ancient ecclesiastical positions toward the Jews (199). Geissler argues that since there can be no question of "antisemitism in the modern sense" existing in the Middle Ages (200), the hostility directed against Jews in vernacular literature of a less lofty sort was not a function of their different "ethnicity" (*Stammeszugehörigkeit*), but of their different *faith*, since as outsiders under the protection of the authorities, they offered an easy target (201). See Gow, *The Red Jews*, chapter II for a discussion of the terms "anti-Semitism" and "anti-Judaism." Frey, "Gottesmörder," gives a brief summary of the Tegernsee *Ludus de Antichristo* on page 44, then contrasts it with the German Lucerne *Antichrist*-play of 1549, as the opposite extreme.

<sup>47</sup> Geissler, "Juden in mittelalterlichen Texten," 202-204. 1348 was a "turning point," according to Geissler (210). Vernacular translations of Latin texts were far more *judenfeindlich* (anti-Jewish) than the originals, Geissler notes (204). By the later Middle Ages, the Jews were no longer a necessary part of the history of salvation, but a projection into that sacred narrative of a contemporary *Feindbild* (stereotyped image of an enemy; 202). The anti-Judaic tendency of early "clerical" (mostly Latin) plays, which sets in after the twelfth century, is outdone by what Geissler does not want to admit is anti-Semitism the all-encompassing hatred of Jews in the later medieval "secular" (mostly vernacular) plays (e.g., the works of Folz and Gengenbach; 225).

<sup>48</sup> Frey leaps from the twelfth to the sixteenth century to illustrate the difference; yet he need have looked no farther than the late thirteenth century for evidence that the Antichrist would be supported by Jews: around 1260, Hugo Ripelin de Argentina brought out his *Compendium theologiae veritatis* (see *infra* for a more detailed discussion). Frey, "Gottesmörder," 44-45. The sixteenth-century play is the German-language *Antichrist*-play of Lucerne, edited by Karl Reuschel, *Die deutschen Weltgerichtsspiele des Mittelalters und der Reformationszeit. Eine literarhistorische Untersuchung, nebst dem Abdruck des Luzerner "Antichrist" von 1549* (Leipzig, 1906; = Teutonia, 4). Cf. Aichele, *Das Antichristdrama*, 27-32 (Tegernsee Antichrist); 78-81 (Lucerne Antichrist), and 142.

<sup>49</sup> Frey, "Gottesmörder," 44. The elaborate stage directions (all that survives of this play) have been edited by Richard Froning, ed., "Die Frankfurter Dirigierrolle," in: *Das Drama des Mittelalters. Die lateinischen Osterfeiern und ihre Entwicklung in Deutschland* (Darmstadt, 1964 [1891-1892; = Deutsche National-Literatur 14], 340-374, and 536ff. See Edith Wenzel, "Synagoge und Ecclesia. Zum Antijudaismus im deutschsprachigen Spiel des Mittelalters," in: *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 12 (1987), 57-81; esp. 59-64; for the dating (before 1350), 61. Wenzel notes that the tone of this play, esp. in the formulaic disputation scene, is still moderate and fairly respectful of "Synagoga," the "elder sister" and regal opponent of now-triumphant "Ecclesia" in keeping with what Wenzel describes as the more moderate tone

Donaueschingen Passion Play assigns the Jews an equally evil role at the End.<sup>50</sup>

By comparison, the only extant medieval French Antichrist play, the *Jour du Jugement* (c. 1330),<sup>51</sup> a more secular version of the apocalyptic material, was didactic in tone and much more anti-Semitic than its twelfth-century Latin predecessor. At the end of time, a devil will father a child on a whore at Babylon, a Jewess from the tribe of Dan. The child will be Antichrist. Emmerson notes that the speeches of the devils and of the mother "particularly emphasize that [...] the mother is a Jew of the tribe of Dan."<sup>52</sup> At the end, when Enoch and Elijah preach, the Jews traditionally the first to be converted by the prophets resist them, labelling them false prophets, traitors and hypocrites, finally killing them at the orders of Antichrist.<sup>53</sup> Written just as the Jews of France were being expelled in stages by means of a series of edicts and counteredicts, this play provides evidence that the secular and vernacular drama of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was markedly more hostile to the Jews than the ecclesiastical Latin drama of an earlier age, and that literature and real life often overlapped in important ways.

The Chester Corpus Christi cycle (which includes sections called The Coming of Antichrist, the only extant middle English Antichrist play and The Last Judgment) presents the Antichrist's life with very few characters and without the detail that the French and Latin plays lavished on him and his followers.<sup>54</sup> The Jews are not singled out as the particular servants of Antichrist. However, the Antichrist does claim to be the Messiah promised by Moses, David and Isaiah. He does just what Christian exegetes had long

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vis-à-vis the Jews in pre-Plague Europe (61). See also Wolfgang F. Michael, *Frühformen der deutschen Bühne* (Berlin, 1963; = Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte, 62), 26-35.

<sup>50</sup> Anthonius Touber, ed., *Das Donaueschinger Passionsspiel*. Frey, "Gottesmörder," cites (44-45) the clear-headed argument of Barbara Könniker to the effect that the actual goal of the redactor is to justify Christian hatred of Jews: "Das Donaueschinger Passionsspiel," in: *Euphorion* 79 (1985), 13-42; 38.

<sup>51</sup> Extant in a fully-illustrated manuscript of the Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon (MS 579), it has been edited by Emile Roy, *Le Jour du Jugement: Mystère français sur le Grand Schisme*, Etudes sur le théâtre français au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris: Emile Bouillon, 1902). I have relied on the description by Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 172-180.

<sup>52</sup> *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 174.

<sup>53</sup> *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 176-177.

<sup>54</sup> For an edition of the Chester cycle, see R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills, *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, vol. 1 (*Text*); vol. 2 (*Commentary and Glossary*) (London: Early English Text Society SS 3, 1974 and 1986). On the dating and authorship of the cycle see Lawrence M. Clopper, "The History and Development of the Chester Cycle," in: *Modern Philology* 75 (1978), 219-246. Clopper insists that the traditional dating to the 1320s is untenable, and that the earliest date supported by reliable evidence for a performance is 1422. See also F.M. Salter, *Mediaeval Drama in Chester* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), 33-42; Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 180-187, and Linus Lucken, *Antichrist and the Prophets of Antichrist in the Chester Cycle* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1940).

been thinking he would do.<sup>55</sup> Here too, the Antichrist implicitly does double duty as the Messiah awaited by the Jews.

The view that attitudes toward the Jews changed, and that Jews were cast in a new and sinister role in the entourage of the final enemy seems to be based on a selection of sources taken largely from a single genre, that of the drama (including paschal passion plays and carnival plays, as well as less "occasion-bound" works).<sup>56</sup> However, Hugo Ripelin of Strasbourg (1210-c. 1270) made it abundantly clear in the thirteenth century that the broad masses of the Jewish people (*plebs iudaica*) would be the especial supporters of Antichrist. Hugo's *Compendium theologiae veritatis*<sup>57</sup> followed the Tiburtine/Adsonian tradition concerning the descent of the Antichrist, who was to be born of the Jewish tribe of Dan. He would claim to be the Jewish Messiah, and the Jewish people would be his special and foremost adherents.<sup>58</sup> Hugo

<sup>55</sup> Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 181.

<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, the thesis is correct for a large body of influential literature. Trachtenberg cites the opinions of "Albertus Magnus" (sc. Hugo Ripelin) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who devoted considerable attention to the Antichrist legend, holding "that Antichrist will be born in Babylon, of the tribe of Dan, will proceed to Jerusalem, where he will be circumcised, and will easily persuade the Jews that he is their long-awaited Messiah. He will then rebuild the temple, establish his throne there, and proclaim himself god. By means of miraculous deeds, bribes, and sheer force he will rapidly accumulate a vast army of adherents, but his power is destined to endure only three and a half years. God will then send Enoch and Elijah to raise an opposition against him, but he will overcome and slay them. Thereupon Christ will dispatch the archangel Michael to destroy him on the Mount of Olives." *The Devil and the Jews*, 34, cited from Preuß, *Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist*, 11ff. Trachtenberg claims that the popular view tended to follow that of the schoolmen, but included "lush detail"; he does not mention that the schoolmen were following the well-known Sibylline and Pseudo-Methodian tradition, which is clear from a comparison of this condensation with the texts cited above.

<sup>57</sup> This was the most widespread basic sketch of scholastic theology in the later Middle Ages and Reformation era. It went through almost 40 printings, and owed much of its medieval vogue to the fact that it was greatly indebted to Bonaventure's "Breviloquium" and to the works of Albert the Great; indeed, it was generally mistaken for the work of one or the other (Christoph Peter Burger, "Endzeiterwartungen im späten Mittelalter," in: *Der Antichrist und die Fünfzehn Zeichen vor dem jüngsten Gericht*. Kommentarband zum Faksimile der ersten typographischen Ausgabe eines unbekannten Straßburger Druckers, um 1480; ed. Friedrich Wittig Verlag {Hamburg, 1979}, 18-78; 21, esp. note 8). For a complete listing and investigation of the manuscript and printed tradition, see Georg Steer's monumental study, *Hugo Ripelin von Straßburg. Zur Rezeptions- und Wirkungsgeschichte des "Compendium theologiae veritatis" im deutschen Spätmittelalter* (Tübingen, 1981). Formerly, the *Compendium* was attributed to Albertus Magnus (Ulm: Johannes Zainer, 1481); Hain 437.

<sup>58</sup> [Antichristus] nascetur autem in babilone de tribu Dan, sicut dicit glossa super apocalypsim. Post hoc veniet in hierusalem, et circumcidet se dicens iudeis se esse christum illis promissum. Unde plebs iudaica specialiter adhaerebit illi, sicut dicit Haymo super Apocalypsim." Trachtenberg cites numerous examples of this hostile and polemical imputation in which anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic motives are inseparable, even dating it to "the early Christian era," although he does not cite a source. An eleventh-century formula of renunciation of Judaism required the convert to anathematize "all those who hope for the coming of the Messiah, or rather of the Antichrist": *The Devil and the Jews*, 32. Toward the end of the thirteenth century,

was not above inventing sources for this assertion.<sup>59</sup> His thinking on the Antichrist is concrete and personal, whereas the *Glossa ordinaria* he carelessly cites calls the Beast of Rev. 13,1, "in a spiritual sense the Antichrist, or generally the entire number of the wicked."<sup>60</sup>

By contrast, Hugo's contemporary, the Franciscan preacher Berthold of Regensburg (c. 1210-1272), represents a much older view of the Jewish role at the End: Berthold argues (in the Augustinian tradition) that the Jews are to be tolerated for two reasons: 1) because they are living reminders of Christ's Passion; 2) because any Jews who survive the Antichrist's time will convert to Christianity before the Last Day.<sup>61</sup> Berthold is much closer to Augustine and Jerome, a representative of the same "moderate" position expressed in the Tegernsee *Ludus de Antichristo*.

The more popular, and probably more usual tradition cast the Jews in a markedly apocalyptic light, both in more popular Latin theology and in vernacular exegetical and literary works, and well before the putative divide of the Black Death. Comestor's identification of the apocalyptic destroyers of Biblical and literary lore ("Gog and Magog enclosed by Alexander") with the ten lost tribes of Israel dates from approximately the time when the Tegernsee play came into being.

Ramón Lull (c. 1235-1315) inveighs against the Jews for awaiting a Messiah who is a man, not God, and who will liberate them from their physical and political captivity. But their captivity is their sinfulness, and since the arrival of a mere man cannot remove their sins (as Christ could), the

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the Tortosa Jewry oath required a Jew to swear "per mesías qui es dit Antecrist, lo cual vos-altes esperats" ("by the Messiah, who is called the Antichrist, for whom you people are waiting"); cited in *The Devil and the Jews*, note 2 to chapter 2 (224), from José Amador de los Ríos, *Historia social, política y religiosa de los Judíos de España y Portugal* (Madrid, 1875-76), three vols.; vol. 1, 572.

<sup>59</sup> The *Glossa ordinaria* reprinted in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* (CXIV), does not mention the idea that the Beast (= Antichrist) would be born in Babylon of the tribe of Dan, an idea that seems to have originated in the Latin Tiburtine Sibyl. Rather, under Rev. 13,1 the *Glossa* notes in a spiritualizing tone that betrays its distance from the concrete, personalizing thought that characterized more popular apocalyptic: "'Et vidi,' etc. Bestia spiritualiter est Antichristus, vel generaliter tota collectio malorum." (733b).

<sup>60</sup> *Glossa ordinaria*, PL CXIV.733b: "'Et vidi' etc. Bestia spiritualiter est Antichristus, vel generaliter tota collectio malorum." This view is shared by Hugh of St. Cher and Hugo a Novo Castro.

<sup>61</sup> Frey, "Gottesmörder," 38: The second reason: "Unde durch ein ander sache: swaz ir den ende krist überlebt, die werdent vor dem jungesten tage alle ze kristenliuten" Cited from Franz Pfeiffer, ed., *Berthold von Regensburg. Vollständige Ausgabe seiner Predigten mit Anmerkungen* (Berlin, 1965 [1862-1880]; = Deutsche Neudrucke, Texte des Mittelalters), 1, 363. The vicious tone of the sermons in general must also be considered: the Talmud is "allez sament ketzerie, unde dâ stêt sô verfluochtiu ketzerie an, daz daz übel ist daz sie lebent." (vol. 1, 401): "heresy through and through, and there is such damnable heresy in it that it is sickening that they are allowed to live."



Jews are therefore in error.<sup>62</sup> This does not suggest that the Messiah awaited by the Jews is the Antichrist, but it leaves room for such an interpretation. Rather, Lull deplores the concrete, personal idea of the Jewish Messiah. Their captivity is the result of sin, not merely of physical exile. Here, a "spiritual" Christian exegete condemns "fleshly" Jewish belief, although much of Christian tradition concerning the Antichrist is itself "fleshly." Perhaps Lull would have argued that Adso, Hugo and their successors had been contaminated by Jewish ideas.

Although Hugo may have consulted a different version of the Ordinary Gloss on the Bible,<sup>63</sup> it is striking that he offers an almost "hagiographic" description of the Antichrist as a person, while the Gloss presents a moralizing interpretation (echoed by Lull's critique of Jewish Messianic hopes). This is the same divide as that which separates the personal Antichrist depicted in the Latin Tiburtine Sibyl, the *Revelations* of the Pseudo-Methodius, Haimo's exegesis of 2 Thess. 2,4, Adso's *Letter*, the Antichrist passage in the *Elucidarium* of Honorius Augustodunensis, Comestor, Hugo Ripelin,<sup>64</sup> and most of the middle High German texts cited below, from the spiritualizing interpretation of Tyconius, Jerome and Augustine. The concrete reality of the Antichrist and of his Jewish servants (the Ten Tribes, the Red Jews, or merely the Jewish people) is part of an historical, perhaps even "secular"<sup>65</sup> version of the history of salvation. This version has little in common with the moralizing and allegorical "high" theological position that could still allow the Jews a relatively innocuous role in the Eschaton. Authors who espouse the latter view avoid any precise identification of the Antichrist and his forces, and insist on the conversion of the Jews. This last prediction might be called "historical" as opposed to "allegorical," but in fact, the role the Jews play in this well-known scenario is perfectly in keeping with their typological

<sup>62</sup> "Item iudei sunt in captivitate christianorum et sarracenorum, ut patet experientia, et dicunt quod sunt in captivitate propter peccatum, et sic sequitur quod illi qui sunt mortui in peccato, cum peccatum sit causa captivitatis eorum, et sic sunt damnati. Iudei spectant Messiam, et dicunt ipsum esse hominem, et non Deum, et desiderant suum adventum ut eos eliciat a captivitate, et siquidem prodest eis illius adventus qui sunt mortui in captivitate et in peccato, cum suus adventus non removeat peccatum; concluditur ergo quod iudei sunt in errore . . ." José Maria Millás Vallicrosa, ed., *El "Liber predicationis contra Judeos"* (Madrid & Barcelona, 1957), 100; 16th Sermon Against the Jews, lines 23-31.

<sup>63</sup> See Karl Froehlich and Margaret T. Gibson, *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria. Introduction to the Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strasbourg 1480/81* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992) for a thorough discussion of the variants available in the Middle Ages, their sources, editors, manuscript and printed editions.

<sup>64</sup> Hugo does offer as an alternative explanation the views of Augustine and Jerome; but his late-medieval reception tended not to get beyond the idea that he mentions first, namely that Gog and Magog are the Ten Tribes enclosed by Alexander the Great beyond the Caspian Mountains.

<sup>65</sup> By "secular," I mean an understanding that remains within the human time-frame.

function as branches broken from the good olive tree, onto which the new branches of Christianity have been grafted (Romans 11,17-36). The broken branches (the Jews) must be re-grafted onto the original tree (by conversion) to fulfil the prophecies concerning the deliverance of Israel. Despite the anti-Judaic (not anti-Semitic!) slant of the Pauline certainty that the Jews will convert, it is the less hostile of these visions of the end.<sup>66</sup> It remained the only alternative to outright hostility for many centuries. Papal policy at its best was informed by this hopeful but ultimately intolerant understanding of Judaism.

The Tegernsee *Antichrist* play and the views of Bernard of Clairvaux represent a variant position that incorporates elements of those just sketched: Antichrist is a real person, but the Jews are not his particular servants. Bernard and the Tegernsee *Ludus de Antichristo* are in accord with anti-Judaic religious views that looked backward to the crucifixion and forward to the final conversion. This less-hostile view of the Jews' function at the end did not disappear, but it was drowned out during the later Middle Ages, at least in the majority of Latin and vernacular treatments. The more popular and usual anti-Semitic identification of Jews with the forces of evil at the end of time is based on legends, literature and exegesis both in the vernacular and in Latin. These texts feature a straightforward and concrete depiction of such personages as the Antichrist or the Red Jews. The moralizing and allegorizing interpretations that looked to Scriptural and patristic authority for information to make sense of the world did not find a place in the majority of popular late-medieval treatments, which mined the Bible and Fathers for citations that could be used to plate their position in the armour of authority. This distaste for abstract thought and scholarship, this preference for concrete identifications is hardly foreign to us, as it characterizes both late-medieval and "late-modern" culture.

#### *The German Antichrist: Vernacular and Latin Sources*

A series of Latin and vernacular texts that associate the Antichrist with Jews can be traced from late antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages. In the following pages, passages from medieval Latin and middle High German exegetical texts that circulated in the German-speaking lands and that feature an historical Antichrist attended by Jews are reviewed. The object of this survey is to prepare for a discussion of popular fifteenth-century apocalyptic texts that specifically link the Antichrist and the Jews.

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<sup>66</sup> See below the discussion of Luther's views concerning the Jews and their conversion.

*The Red Jews and Antichrist*

Both the poem *Reinfried von Braunschweig* (after 1291)<sup>67</sup> and Heinrich von Neustadt's epic *Von Gottes Zukunft* (c. 1300)<sup>68</sup> combine the details of the Antichrist story (familiar from the Tiburtine Sibyl and Hugo Ripelin's *Compendium*) with the Alexander legend (including the ancient story of the Amazons) and the specifically German tale of the Red Jews. This precise mix will occur again, in the fifteenth-century *Antichrist* books. A similar concoction (except for the "German" Red Jews) can be found in Alfonso de Espina's  *Fortalitium fidei*<sup>69</sup> and such texts as Pamphilius Gengenbach's 1517 play *Der Nollhart*.<sup>70</sup> According to Heinrich's version, when the Antichrist arises to conquer the earth, he will send for Gog, the Amazons, Magog and the Red Jews, "evil

<sup>67</sup> Ed. Karl Bartsch, in: Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart 109 (Tübingen, 1871), 569-570; [19546] "ein dinc sag ich iuch wol für wâr, Gog und Magog der juden lant stât in der kûneginne hant, dâ mit die rôten juden sint, [19550] als man noch geschriben vint, wie Alexander sî beslôz mit berge und mit müren grôz und ouch mit dem grienigen mer daz âne wazzer sunder wer [19555] fluizet stateclîche. diu kûneginne rîche vor aller diet diu hêrste sol ouch sîn diu êrste diu an der jungestlichen vrist [19560] den vertânen Entekrist für got ze herren triuget und im ir hilfe biuget mit juden und mit heiden." Translation: [19546] One thing I will now tell you in truth, Gog and Magog of the Jews' country are under the queen's [of the Amazons] command, with whom the Red Jews are to be found, [19550] as one still can read for oneself, how Alexander enclosed them with mountains and towering walls and also with the sandy sea, which without water and free of dams and weirs [19555] flows most majestically. That most powerful queen, above all others the most venerable, will furthermore be the first at the end of earthly time [19560] to worship the damnable Antichrist as the Lord God and to offer him her assistance as the Jews and heathens will likewise do.

<sup>68</sup> In: Heinrichs von Neustadt "Appolonius von Tyrland" nach der Gothaer Handschrift. "Gottes Zukunft" und "Visio Philiberti" nach der Heidelberger Handschrift, ed. S. Singer (Dublin & Zurich, 1967<sup>2</sup>; = Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, 7), 331-352; 413-414: "Wie der Endeclist nach Gog/und nach Magog und nach den/roden Juden sendet./5540 Als cz an der zit ist,/Die mere vernimpt Endeclist./"Daz ist mir wider und unwert./Ez endet kolbe und swert./Mir ist die rede unmere/5545 Daz zwen alte beltenere/Sich su'ln setzen wider mich./Ich bin geweltig und rich,/Caspî daz beslozen lant/Daz ist gar in miner hant,/5550 Die roden Ju'den, daz volg Gog,/Amazones und Magog,/Und waz der himel hat bedaht,/Daz mu'z dinen miner maht:/Das hat Got mir gegeben,/5555 Got, mit dem ich icmer leben.'" Translation: The Antichrist sends for Gog and Magog and for the Red Jews./[5540] When the time was ripe,/Antichrist heard the tale/[that Elijah and Enoch had come to oppose him]./"I find this abhorrent and sickening:/only clubs and swords will put an end to it./I do not care about the news/[5545] that two old beggars/are to oppose me./I am powerful and mighty,/and Caspia, the enclosed country,/is entirely in my hands./[5550] The Red Jews, the people of Gog,/the Amazons and Magog,/and whoever else Heaven may have placed there/must serve my power:/God has granted me this,/[5555] God, with whom I will live forever."

<sup>69</sup> First printed 1471; see below for details and a more thorough treatment.

<sup>70</sup> *Der Nollhart. Diß sind die prophetien sancti Methodii und Nollhardi welche sind gespielt worden im xv<sup>o</sup> und xvii<sup>o</sup> Ior von etlichen Burgeren einer loblichen stat Basel* (Basel, 1517; I used Wolfenbüttel 263 Quod.); another edition: *Die prophecien sancti Methodii und Nollhardi* (Augsburg [J. Schönsperger], 1517). Gengenbach (ca. 1480-1524/25) was a printer, bookseller and *Meistersinger* who became a citizen of Basel in 1511. A modern edition has been prepared by V. Uffer, *Der Nollhart* (Stuttgart/Bern, 1982; = Schweizer Texte, 1). See H. Rupprich, *Die deutsche Literatur vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Barock. Erster Teil (1371-1520)* (Munich, 1970), 287.

peoples [. . .] who must serve my power: God has granted this to me."<sup>71</sup> The Red Jews are merely a part of Heinrich's excursus on the Antichrist and the last days. He notes at the end of the passage that the Jews will convert and there will be no telling Jews from Gentiles: the conversion prophecy finds its way into personal Antichrist narratives as well.

The middle High German version of the Passau Anonymous (c. 1330) pushes the identification of the Antichrist, the Red Jews and the Jewish Messiah even farther. "The Jews and many Judaizing Christians"<sup>72</sup> imagine that this people [the Ten Tribes] is holy: they would be glad if they were to come, and would join their ranks immediately."<sup>73</sup> "These Jews, who are also called the Red Jews" are the focus of the passage; they are kept locked up by God's might only until the time of the Antichrist, when they will be let loose. Thus, not only is the Messiah awaited by the Jews none other than the Antichrist, but Gog and Magog (who will accompany the Antichrist) are the Red Jews and identical with the Ten Tribes awaited by "the Jews and Judaizing Christians" as a "holy people," their deliverers.<sup>74</sup> If the Jewish Messiah is the Antichrist, then it is only logical that the Ten Tribes are apocalyptic destroyers, the Red Jews. In both cases, a Jewish belief that had a significant influence on Christianity is interpreted in terms of the distorted images medieval Christians formed of its original content.

The middle Low German *sielen trost* (c. 1370) tells nearly the same story as Hugo Ripelin, with the notable addition of the "Red Jews, who are enclosed" (by Alexander).<sup>75</sup> However, the Antichrist says that he is not the Messiah of the Jews, but Christ, God's son. The Red Jews "follow" (serve) him, rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, worship him as a god, say he is Christ and that "our Lord Jesus Christ" was the Antichrist: therefore the Antichrist is the Messiah of the Red Jews. In the middle High German and early modern German versions (*Der Grosse Seelentrost*), he is the Messiah of the Jews.

In the fourteenth/fifteenth-century translation of the *Gesta Romanorum*,<sup>76</sup> the

<sup>71</sup> "Die bose diet" of line 5856 refers to "Die roden Ju'den, daz volg Gog,/Amazones und Magog,/Und waz der himel hat bedaht,/Daz muez dinen miner maht:/Das hat Got mir gegeben."

<sup>72</sup> A reference to Jerome, *Commentaria in Ezechielem*, XI, 38 (PL XXV.372c-373a; CChr LXXV.525, 1476-1482; 526, 1497-1500). Jerome says the Jews and Judaizing Christians believe Gog to be the numberless Scyths "beyond the Caucasus, by the Caspian Sea." Jerome disagrees, arguing that the Apocalypse of John is to be understood in a mystical sense, and that Gog and Magog are "all the perverse and evil enemies of the church."

<sup>73</sup> "Nun wenend die juden vnd ettlich jüdisch kristen, das selb volk syend hailig lüt vnd sechend gern, wenne sy komen, wann si kerend zehant in ir schar." (lines 40-43).

<sup>74</sup> See below for a more detailed discussion of this belief.

<sup>75</sup> See the edition of Margarete Schmitt, *Der Grosse Seelentrost. Ein niederdeutsches Erbauungsbuch des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Cologne & Graz, 1959).

<sup>76</sup> *Gesta Romanorum, Das ist der Roemer Tat*, ed. Adalbert Keller (Quedlinburg and Leipzig, 1841; = Bibliothek der gesammten deutschen National-Literatur, 22).

Red Jews are referred to as such and identified as the "Ten Tribes enclosed by Alexander." The passage in question concentrates on the Alexander story. The reference to the Antichrist is almost incidental: "When this same people [the Red Jews] breaks out with their Antichrist and martyrs the people [Christians], he [God] will do great signs."<sup>77</sup> The Antichrist is peculiar to the Red Jews ("their Antichrist"), and the focus is clearly on this evil people. It would seem as though the Antichrist were mentioned merely to authenticate the apocalyptic credentials of the Red Jews. But the Apocalypse can hardly be imagined without the Antichrist. Here is a decidedly popular shift in emphasis based on strong anti-Jewish sentiment that is concerned less with Biblical Revelation than with the menace of the Red Jews. This is also the most extreme form of association between Antichrist and the Red Jews: he is "theirs," their Messiah.

One version of the middle High German Historiated Bible<sup>78</sup> (fourteenth/fifteenth century) also tells the story of the Antichrist in a variation reminiscent of that offered by Hugo Ripelin. The Antichrist is born of the tribe of Dan in Babylon; he will be circumcised in order to pose as the Jewish Messiah, and all the Jews will hasten to him; he will send out twelve apostles and seventy-two disciples to preach his message. The *dénouement* is as expected.

The most striking exemplar of this tradition is the German *Antichrist* "block-book." First printed around 1450 in a transitional format, in which the images are woodcut prints and the text hand-written, the chiroxylographic *Antichrist* of c. 1450 is not merely an *unicum*, it is an unique testimonial from the dawn of Western printing to the urgency and popularity of this theme. The oldest surviving manuscript dates to 1430.<sup>79</sup> There are eight manuscripts extant.<sup>80</sup> A xylographic edition (text and images are woodcuts: Nuremberg, 1472) and a number of typographically printed editions (e.g., the Strasbourg *Antichrist* of 1480 with woodcut illustrations)<sup>81</sup> are also known.<sup>82</sup> The text of

<sup>77</sup> *Gesta*, "Wann daz selb volk chumt mit irem antichrist auz und marternt die læut so tuot er gro'ssers zaichen durch seinen willen." (lines 23-25).

<sup>78</sup> *Die mittelhochdeutschen Historienbibeln*, Family I, "Dô got in siner magenkraft" (vol. 2), 487-488.

<sup>79</sup> Burger, "Endzeiterwartungen," 18.

<sup>80</sup> Burger, "Endzeiterwartungen," 19.

<sup>81</sup> For the text, see *Der Antichrist. Faksimile der ersten typographischen Ausgabe* (Hamburg, 1979). The text has been rendered in modern German by Karin Boveland in the companion volume, *Der Antichrist und Die Fünfzehn Zeichen vor dem Jüngsten Gericht*. Kommentarband zum Faksimile der ersten typographischen Ausgabe eines unbekannten Straßburger Druckers, um 1480 (Hamburg, 1979).

<sup>82</sup> Another fifteenth-century xylographic version, undated and without place of publication, can be added to the list: *Enndtkrist. Hie hebet sich ann von dem Ennkrist* (title incomplete), 27 sheets in-folio; and another undated typographic edition, without place of publication, of 20 sheets, also in-folio. Another edition came out at Strasbourg in-quarto, published by Hupfuff,

these early printed versions is in essence identical. An English edition, published by the astute businessman Wynkyn de Worde, begins with the words *The Byrth and Lyfe of the Moost False and Deceytfull Antechryste*. This version appeared around 1520. It was based on an edition published as early as 1505, and was derived at least in part from the German *Antichrist*-books, though it does not mention the Red Jews.<sup>83</sup> The Jews, however, are intimately involved in the career of the Antichrist in the English version as well. The late fifteenth-century French<sup>84</sup> and Spanish<sup>85</sup> lives of Antichrist are not unimportant, but they also are derived in large part from the earlier German *Antichrist*-books. The paucity of surviving editions and the isolation of these texts, compared to the proliferation of Antichrist material in German, justify the narrower focus chosen here.

More important than these details of publishing are the form and content of the text. On fol. 5, plate "a" of *Antichrist 1480* (chosen for convenience of reference), the Antichrist is shown being circumcised at Jerusalem. He announces to the Jews that he is "the Messiah promised them, for whom they have waited for so long, as the *Compendium* says."<sup>86</sup> In 5b, "the Jews begin to rebuild the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem, which had been destroyed long ago by the Roman emperors Titus and Vespasian. The Jews say that their God has arrived."<sup>87</sup> Antichrist calls himself the "true Messiah" and "true God on earth."<sup>88</sup> On fol. 11a, "the Antichrist has the Jews

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undated; there is also a late Erfurt edition by Hans Maler (Maller), in-quarto, typographic, of 1516; Theodor Oswald Weigel, *Verzeichnis der Xylographischen Bücher des XV. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1856), 6.

<sup>83</sup> The other sources of the English text are the *Livre de Auctorites de Saintes Docteurs: Touchant de L'Advenement et du mauvais Antechrist* (Lyons, 1495) and *The Coming of Antichrist*, included in *The Art to Live Well and Die Well* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1505). See Joseph M. Ricke's Ph.D. thesis "The Antichrist *Vita* at the End of the Middle Ages: An Edition of The Byrth and Lyfe of the Moost False and Deceytfull Antechryst" (Houston: Rice University, 1982). Ricke's edition is from the sole surviving print, preserved at Cambridge University Library, Syn. 7.52.17.

<sup>84</sup> *L'Advenement de l'Antechrist* (Paris: Antoine Verard, 1492), in-folio, typographic; later printed with several other works to form *L'Art de Bien Vivre et de Bien Mourir* (Paris, Antoine Verard, 1493); the *Livre de Auctorites de Saintes Docteurs: Touchant de l'Advenement et du Mauvais Antechrist* (sic) (Lyon, 1495); *La vie du mauvais Antechrist* (Lyon, 1499, in-folio; and Antwerp, 1560, in-octo, typographic). Contemporary Latin editions included *De Antichristo auctoritas sanctorum doctorum* (Milan, 1496), in-folio, and *De turpissima conceptione, nativitate et aliis praesag. diab. illius pessimi hominum antichristi* (Paris: Le Noir, undated), in-quarto, typographic. See Weigel, *Verzeichnis*, 6-7.

<sup>85</sup> *Libro del Antichristo* (Saragossa, 1496); typographic.

<sup>86</sup> "Czu ierusalem lot sich der Enndkrist beschniden/nach der alten ee. und spricht zû den juden. Er sey messias der in verheissen sy. Des sy alslang gewartet haben. Und das stot ouch in Compendio." *Antichrist 1480*, fol. 5a.

<sup>87</sup> "Hye heben die juden den Tempel Salomonis zû ierusalem wider an zu bûen. Der vor zyten czersto'rt wart/von den romischen keisern Tyto und Vespasiano. Und die juden sprechen/ir got sy kumen." *Antichrist 1480*, 5b. The detail is from the *Compendium*: "Judci namque templum quod romani destruxerant reedificabunt." (lines 41-42).

<sup>88</sup> "Der wor messias" and "worer got uff erden": *Antichrist 1480*, fols. 12b and 13a.

marked on the forehead and on the right hand as a sign that they believe in him, as is written in the Apocalypse of John in the *Compendium*, 7.”<sup>89</sup> The Antichrist sends out his “apostles” to preach and convert the world to him. One of these messengers preaches to the Queen of the Amazons and the Red Jews; “these same Jews will break out at the time of the Antichrist.” The Red Jews break out in order to join the Antichrist after he has manifested himself at Jerusalem for the battle against Christendom. Like the Jews who rebuild the Temple (another detail from the *Compendium*, see *Antichrist* 1480,5b), the military Red Jews are his particular followers.

The illustration on 13b depicts a “false apostle” preaching to the Queen of the Amazons, a lady-in-waiting, and a bearded male figure bearing a scepter and girded with a sword. He is not wearing a Jew’s hat, but his beard and the content of the caption make it clear that he is one of the Red Jews. Armed and bearing a regal scepter, he represents the threatening paradox of a military Jewish kingdom. To medieval Christians, this was a role-reversal, a *Verkehrung* in the sense of the world turned upside-down, both unthinkable and absurd except in this apocalyptic context. Next, the “pilgrimage” or ingathering (*czûzag*) to the Antichrist from all over the world and of all kings begins. “First of all, the Red Jews break out and cause the world great suffering. These same Jews are called Gog and Magog and their ten tribes” (14b).<sup>90</sup>

The Red Jews then march to Jerusalem to champion the Antichrist. The illustration to 14b depicts a king, a queen, a lady of high fashion, and two Jews, all on horseback. One Jew appears to be carrying a small round shield, i.e., he too is armed, which had been illegal since the general pacification of Mainz in 1103. In the illustration to 15b, the Antichrist takes gold coins from a tray held by a demon and hands them to his followers, who are marked on the forehead with his sign. They are a woman, a turbaned figure

<sup>89</sup> “Der Enndkrist heysset die juden bezeichnen an die stirn. Und uff die rechten hand/zû einem zeichen das sy an in glouben, das stet geschriben in Appocalipsi johannis in Compendio septimo”: *Antichrist* 1480,11a. Here the sealing of the servants of God (Rev. 7,3-17), who are twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes of Israel (i.e., including the ten “lost” tribes) with a sign on the forehead is confused with the sealing of the servants of the Beast on the right hand or forehead (Rev. 13,16-18); the confusion will continue with the repetition of the sealing of the servants of Antichrist in 16b and 17b. The source used by the author is not the Apocalypse of St. John, but Hugo’s *Compendium*, as the text indicates: “et omnes suo caractere signari in manu dextra, et in frontibus suis sicut habet Apocalipsim 13[17].” This confusion reflects the current belief that the Jews will be the servants of Antichrist, not the suggestion in Rev. 7 that the servants of God will consist of all twelve tribes of Israel; it would have been improbable had the author been well-versed in the Vulgate. He generally cites Scripture via the *Compendium*, which suggests that he was not consulting the Bible.

<sup>90</sup> From servants of God sealed with a mark on the forehead (Rev. 7), the Ten Tribes have become servants of Antichrist: medieval tradition filters Scripture.

(a Turk or a Jew) and two figures whose dress and headgear indicate that they are Jews.

Written in German without complex citations, the *Antichrist*-book was a work of popular exegesis. Not faithfulness to Scripture, but received wisdom, "common knowledge," current beliefs concerning the Last Things<sup>91</sup> and attitudes to the Jews among the nobility, urban merchants and guildsmen in all likelihood, the early audience of this sort of limited and time-consuming printing<sup>92</sup> were the standard of interpretation and truth. Above all, what was "current" turns out to be what was sanctioned by the rich medieval tradition examined in the preceding pages. The putative German-speaking audience seem to have had some demands as concerns authority: the main source, which the author cites as such, is Hugo Ripelin's *Compendium*.

As we have seen, the author of the *Antichrist*-book was not overly concerned to ensure that the interpretations he proposed conformed exactly to Scripture; "close enough" seems to have been "good enough." Other authorities (e.g., Fathers and Doctors of the Church) were often held to be sufficient proof, but in this text, authorities are cited without regard for precise meaning. An incorrect reference to Jerome in a critical passage proves that medieval not patristic tradition, and legendary not theological authority were the central pillars of the mental edifice revealed here: the text of *Antichrist 1480*, 13<sup>b</sup>, reads:

And another emissary [of the Antichrist] preaches to the Queen of the Amazons and to the Red Jews whom king Alexander enclosed in the Caspian Mountains. These Jews will break out at the time of the Antichrist as St. Jerome writes.

In fact, Jerome's point in his commentary on Ezekiel is that Gog and Magog<sup>93</sup> are not particular peoples whose identity can be got at by means of clever etymologies, which he calls "vanity and a baseless science of names."<sup>94</sup> In

<sup>91</sup> A contemporary (mid-fifteenth-century) Flemish block-book also depicts apocalyptic figures as Jews: the locusts from the bottomless pit (Rev. 9,3-11) appear much as they are described in Revelation, but instead of a crown of gold, they sport Jew's hats: Zafran, *Iconography of Antisemitism*, vol. 1, 26, citing Heinrich Theodor Musper, *Die Urausgaben der holländischen Apokalypse und Biblia Pauperum*, 3 vols. (Munich, 1961); Zafran reproduces this illustration in vol. 2, plate 53.

<sup>92</sup> The printing runs in the fifteenth century were still very modest, compared even to the edition sizes of the Reformation era. In the 1470s, 100-200 copies of a book were commonly printed, and in the 1480s, printings of 400-500 were average; some reached 1,000 or more: Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book. The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*, trans. David Gerard (London: NLB, 1976), 217-218.

<sup>93</sup> Jerome wrote concerning Gog and Magog only, as the Ten Tribes would not be confused with them (as they are here under the name Red Jews) until the twelfth century.

<sup>94</sup> Line 39: "superbia et falsi nominis scientia." *Commentariorum in Hiezekielem libri XIV: Ez.* 11,38,1-23; *CChr* LXXV, 526, line 1512.



the *Antichrist*-books as in their main source, Hugo's *Compendium*, an appeal to authority (Jerome and the Gloss, respectively) actually masks the opposite of the "canonical" position: because that which everyone knows (i.e., the medieval tradition) *must* be the truth as witnessed to by the Fathers (Jerome) and the Church (the Ordinary Gloss)! The author selectively interprets Jerome's comments on the matter through the medium of standard medieval beliefs concerning the Last Things. He has no trouble perceiving in the mysterious nations that Jerome and the Bible called Gog and Magog the imaginary medieval reality which he and his contemporaries knew as the Red Jews.

This tells us a good deal about the unidentified author, and allows us to draw a parallel to Hugo Ripelin. In this kind of question, common knowledge was a better guide to the truth than dusty tomes. Authorities had to be cited, but citations were filtered through what was already known, so that they were understood to say what the *communis opinio* expected to hear.

All the elements that had accumulated since the time of Hugo Ripelin are included in this text, about which Christoph Peter Burger has said "it does not attempt to establish any sort of order" (in the many traditions it cites).<sup>95</sup> Burger thus fails to appreciate the character and genre of the text: its ordering, or lack thereof, is the whole point. Hugo, the tradition of the *Von Gottes Zukunft* or the Passau *Anonymous*, and anything else handy went into this fascinating congeries. The appended work called the "Fifteen Signs preceding the Last Judgment" was generally attributed to Jerome; in this case, it was drawn largely from the version included in the *Legenda aurea* of Jacobus a Voragine (1228/30-1298).<sup>96</sup> In medieval texts, the Fifteen Signs traditionally follow the death of the Antichrist.<sup>97</sup> Logic and system are foreign to the tradition, to the author(s) and redactors and to the audience of the *Antichrist*-book. The German readership of this popular text would not have been interested in systematic, logical, orderly exposition.<sup>98</sup> What was *supposed* to be there, according to tradition, *was* there.

<sup>95</sup> Burger, "Endzeiterwartungen," 51.

<sup>96</sup> Burger, "Endzeiterwartungen," 18.

<sup>97</sup> This is the case in Hugo a Novo Castro's *Tractatus de victoria Christi contra Antichristum* (2,10) and in most fifteenth-century illustrated lives of the Antichrist, including the Old French *De l'avenement Antechrist* and the Middle English *Cursor Mundi*: Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 83-84. Burger does not mention the revealing pre-history of association between the Fifteen Signs and the life of Antichrist. On the Fifteen Signs, see William Heist, *The Fifteen Signs Before Doomsday* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State College Press, 1952). One of the earliest versions is the "De quindecim signis" of Pseudo-Bede, *PL* XCIV.555 (England, 8th century); see also Georg Nölle, "Die Legende von den Fünfzehn Zeichen vor dem Jüngsten Gerichte," in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 6 (1874), 413-476.

<sup>98</sup> Burger is consternated by what must appear to him as a logical contradiction: it is said that the Antichrist will be born in "a city called the Great Babylon" of the tribe of Dan (an element from the Sibylline tradition). However, this must happen *before* the Red Jews break out of their mountain prison, Burger objects. The Red Jews are the Ten Tribes, of which

*Antichrist or Messiah*

Ulrich von Pottenstein (1420), the court chaplain (*Hofkaplan*) at Vienna to Archduke Albrecht IV,<sup>99</sup> belonged to the vanguard of a clerical circle including Heinrich von Langenstein, Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl and Stephan von Landskron that valued preaching and exegetical writing in the vernacular highly enough to engage in both, composing some of the first serious and sophisticated theological treatises in the German language a century before Luther chose the language of the "common man in the street" as a reference point for his famous Bible translation and his theological pamphlets in German. In the foreword to his "Catechism," a volume intended for "pious and intelligent layfolk" (*frummen und verstanden layer*), Ulrich distances himself from the clumsy word-for-word German translations (*aygen dewtsch*) from the Latin that had been usual, and describes and defends his use of the common language spoken around him as the appropriate means of communicating with the non-Latinate majority.<sup>100</sup> Thus, Ulrich was motivated both by a concern to communicate with the common people and by respect for accuracy. In his commentary on the Ten Commandments,<sup>101</sup> written around

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Dan is one. This is an element of a separate but equally authoritative medieval tradition that also has roots in antiquity. Burger looks to the *Compendium* for help in explaining these contradictions ("diese Unstimmigkeiten . . . aufklären"), but gets no help because Hugo on this point, at least, is tuned to another frequency, that of Augustine and Jerome, who both refuse to see in Gog and Magog any specific peoples, much less the Ten Tribes ("Endzeiterwartungen," 47-48). These two parallel and related, but unharmonized medieval traditions receive equal weight as they are woven seamlessly into a narrative that might seem illogical or naive. We ought to be able to look beyond such terms to the structures underlying such compilation: not credulity, but deference to tradition and a pragmatic taste for concrete detail (cf. Leonardo Olschki, "Der Brief des Presbyters Johannes," 6) are behind these *Unstimmigkeiten*.

<sup>99</sup> For information on Ulrich, see the *Verfasserlexikon*, III (old series: 1943), 918-923 (entry by F. Ranke).

<sup>100</sup> "Auch ist czu merkchen, daz ich vil der schrift, die ich in dem puch gesezt hab, vil paz hette mügen czu ainer aygen dewtsch bringen denn die dew<sup>t</sup>sch ist, die ich gesezt hab. Nu hab ich den gemainen lauf dewtscher sprach nach des lanndes gewonhait für mich genomen; wann daz puch und die lere, die darinnen begriffen sein, schikchen sich gemainchleich, wie man die lere predigen schülle vor dem volcke. Darczu mag sich an allen steten aigne dewtsch nach der latein, als die lawtet und nach dem text liget, weder geschickchen noch gefügen. Wann umbred bringen an maniger stat in der schrift mer nützes vor dem gemainen volckh denn aygnew dewtsch als daz die gelerten wissen, yedoch also, das die warhait des sinnes mit umbred icht verrucket werde."; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 3050, I<sup>va</sup>; cited from Thomas Hohmann, *Heinrich von Langenstein "Unterscheidung der Geister" Lateinisch und Deutsch. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Übersetzungsliteratur aus der Wiener Schule* (Munich, 1977), 261.

<sup>101</sup> The work in which this commentary is found treats the *Magnificat* and the Ten Commandments. The manuscript is in the Cathedral Library, Kalocsa, Hungary (Kalocsa Főszekésgyházi Könyvtar), ms. 629. Robert Bast (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) drew my attention to this important representative of early vernacular catechesis and kindly loaned me his microfilm copy of the manuscript.

1406, Ulrich devotes some pages to the theme of the "Christ" (Messiah) who some Jews claim was born when Vespasian destroyed the Temple,<sup>102</sup> and who is biding his time until the appointed hour arrives, when God will send him forth to liberate the Jews. In a section that is essentially a translation from Nicholas of Lyra's Bible postilla, Ulrich discusses the supposed whereabouts of this false Messiah, the Jewish "Christ," and says we ought to put the question to the Jews:

So they should be asked where Christ is, and where he has been for so long a time. Many of them [the Jews] will respond that he is with the angels living as Moses did, who lived forty days on Mount Sinai, and is waiting until the Lord orders him to reveal himself. Others say that he is the other side of the mountains that are called the Caspian Mountains, waiting there in the same way for the Lord's orders to come at the time when this people [the Jews] is to be redeemed.<sup>103</sup>

The false Christ awaited by the Jews is rumoured according to "some Jews" to be on the other side of the Caspian Mountains: where the Red Jews/Ten Tribes are. It is not surprising that the false Messiah should be located among the Jews who, as was widely believed, will help him when the Lord orders him to come forth and deliver the Jews of the Diaspora. Ulrich charges the Jews with making up stories; that the Jews cannot agree as to their Messiah's whereabouts proves that the story is entirely fictitious.<sup>104</sup> The evidence provided by Ulrich is negative, not positive: he imputes to the

<sup>102</sup> Christians charged that since the scepter shall not pass from Judah until the Messiah comes (Gen. 49,10) and the Jews lost their kingdom under Vespasian, the Messiah must have come before that time, namely Jesus. The explanation presented here is that the true Messiah was born at the time of the destruction of the Temple (i.e., before the scepter passed from Judah), and is waiting "in reserve."

<sup>103</sup> "Darumb sind sy ze fragen Wa Christus sey, und wa er so lange zeyt gewesen sey. Da sprechen ir ettleich er sey mit den engeln und lebe in der masse als moyses die virczig tag gelebet hab auf dem perge Synay, und warte wenn im von dem herren gepoten werde sich zu offenbaren. Die anderen sprechen er sey enhalb des gepirgs die perg man nennet Caspios und wart da in gela[i]her weyse des gepotes des herren wann das volck schullen erloset werden." *Magnificat und zehn Gebote*, book IV, chapter lxvii, G, col. 2, lines 7-16. The passage from Nicholas of Lyra, O.F.M. (1340), *Biblia Latina cum postillis N. de Lyra*, 3 vols. (Venice, 1481); Hain 3164; cited here from the copy held by the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Biblia-S 4° 127: "ergo ante obsidionem illam et miseriam illam [sc. templi] venit christus. Hoc concedunt multi apud eos [sc. Judeos]: dicunt quod ipse christus natus sit in die destructionis templi. Sed cum ab illo tempore fluxerunt 1235 [sic: 1335?] anni: queritur ab ipsis ubi sit ipse christus: et ubi per tantum tempus fuerit: Et dicunt aliqui quod ipse cum angelis vivens in eo modo quo moyses vixit xl diebus in monte synai et expectat preceptum domini ad se ostendendum. Alii dicunt quod est ultra montes Caspios expectans preceptum domini de liberatione populi...": In: *ibid.*, vol. III, under the title "Libellus editus per magistrum Nicolaum de Lyra ordinis monorum theologic professorum: in quo sunt pulcherrime questiones iudaicam perfidiam in catholica fide improbanτες."

<sup>104</sup> "Soleiche wandelbertichait beweiset das ir rede ain getichtes ding ist." *Ibid.*, G, col. 2, lines 23-24.

Jews the erroneous belief that their Messiah is waiting somewhere beyond the fabled Caspian Mountains. Ulrich concurs with Lyra and pillories this notion as absurd.

The context of the "Catechism" is early fifteenth-century Vienna. In 1397, according to the "Wiener Annalen," a thousand Styrian Jews had fled the countryside to take refuge at Vienna.<sup>105</sup> On the night of November 5th, 1406, a mob ransacked and burned the Jewish quarter. The looting, which went on for three days, according to one source, resulted in no injuries but in the destruction of financial records and of goods estimated at more than 100,000 florins.<sup>106</sup> Students also participated in the riot.<sup>107</sup> Linked in the minds and works of Viennese theologians with the heretical Hussites,<sup>108</sup> the Jews came under popular and university attack at precisely the moment that Ulrich added his voice to the numerous contemporary disputations, sermons and treatises aimed at the conversion of Jews to Christianity.<sup>109</sup> Given this atmosphere, it is hardly surprising that around Easter of 1420, after charges of ritual murder had been brought against a Jewish resident of Enns, all the Jews "above and below the [river] Enns," including women and children, were imprisoned.<sup>110</sup> All those who refused baptism, and who refused to reveal the whereabouts of their putative buried wealth, met a horrible end: "On Black Sunday [12 March, 1421] they tortured these same Jews, all who showed evidence of wealth buried in the ground. In Vienna alone, they burned 240 persons," not counting those who chose *kiddush ha-shem* (sanctification of the holy name) by committing ritual suicide or killing one another to avoid slaughter.<sup>111</sup> Thus, Vienna and environs were rid of the "Jewish menace" and the Faculty of Theology turned its attention to the Hussites. Ulrich's critique of Jewish Messianism thus coincided with a high point of anti-Semitic agitation at Vienna. This might not be remarkable but for the fact that the story of a Jewish Messiah (i.e., the Antichrist) secluded somewhere in the "Caspian Mountains" necessarily implied the threat of Gog

<sup>105</sup> Michael H. Shank, "Unless You Believe, You Shall Not Understand." *Logic, University, and Society in Late Medieval Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 190; cited from "Wiener Annalen (1349-1404)," *MGH, Deutsche Chroniken*, vol. 6 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1933), 238.

<sup>106</sup> Shank, *Unless You Believe*, 190, citing from the *Kleine Klosterneuburger Chronik*, ed. H.J. Zeibig, in: *Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichtsquellen* 7 (1851), 227-252; esp. 238-239, and from Thomas Ebendorfer von Haselbach, *Chronicon Austriae*, ed. Alphons Lhotsky, in: *MGH, Scriptores*, NF 13 (Stuttgart, 1957), 303.

<sup>107</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>108</sup> Shank, *Unless You Believe*, 188-189; there seems indeed to have been a certain amount of rapprochement between Bohemian Jews and Hussites: see Ruth Gladstein, "Eschatological Trends in Bohemian Jewry during the Hussite Period," in: A. Williams, ed., *Prophecy and Millenarianism* (New York, 1980), 241-256.

<sup>109</sup> Shank, *Unless You Believe*, 190-197.

<sup>110</sup> Shank, *Unless You Believe*, 191, citing Zeibig, *Kleine Klosterneuburger Chronik*, 245.

<sup>111</sup> Shank, *Unless You Believe*, 196-197; citing Zeibig, *Kleine Klosterneuburger Chronik*, 245.

and Magog, or in the German-speaking lands, the Red Jews: the apocalyptic destroyers who will serve Antichrist. Ulrich's Jewish contemporaries may well have spoken of the Moschiach as secluded in the east; many Jews after this time would do so too as a result of the confusion of the legendary Ten Tribes (who had positive connotations for medieval Jews) with Gog and Magog.<sup>112</sup>

The *Fortalicium fidei* ("Fortress of Faith") of Alphonsus a Spina (Alfonso de Espina, bishop of Orense, 1469) appeared in at least seven editions in Germany between 1471 and 1525.<sup>113</sup> Espina has the Queen of the Amazons, in the Alexander novel merely a neighbour of the "enclosed peoples," guard (in conjunction with the Great Khan of Cathay) the "sons of Israel"<sup>114</sup> who were enclosed by Alexander between two camps or fortresses (*castra*) called "guth" and "maguth."<sup>115</sup> These enclosed Jews<sup>116</sup> are endowed with the horrible characteristics of the "unclean peoples": "naked savages, they live on raw meat and on the fruits of trees."<sup>117</sup> When the Antichrist appears, they will join him and accompany him to Jerusalem, where he will reign as a mighty king "by virtue of their support."<sup>118</sup> Then all the other Jews dispersed throughout the world (i.e., the descendants of Benjamin and Judah) will gather at Jerusalem. The Antichrist will be circumcised and claim to be the Christ promised the Jews in their Law. He will say that "our Lord Jesus" was a great deceiver and a magus.<sup>119</sup> For our present purpose, the heart of this portion is as follows:

And all the Jews, deceived by wondrous signs and drawn by promises, will come pouring in to Jerusalem and cleave to him, for they burn with an excessive desire for the Coming of their Messiah, by whom they hope to be delivered from their captivity. And since they will see him in the flush of prosperity, radiant with glory, subjugating other kings, they who have long been blinded by their false beliefs will accept him as the true Messiah,

<sup>112</sup> See Gow, *The Red Jews*, esp. chapter IV.

<sup>113</sup> The *Fortalicium fidei contra fidei christianae hostes* was first printed at Strasbourg by Johann Mentelin in 1471 (Hain 872). At least six further editions appeared over the next fifty years: Basel (1475), Nuremberg (1485), Lyon (1487), Nuremberg (1494), Lyon (1511 and 1525).

<sup>114</sup> The "filii israel" are the Ten Tribes; fol. 145<sup>v</sup>, col. 2, line 17.

<sup>115</sup> These are historical distortions of Gog and Magog, Gog having been interpreted as "Goths" for which Augustine was indirectly responsible, which were common in the Romance versions of the Alexander story. Again, the reference to Comestor ("magister hystoriarum") is not accurate. Espina is conjuring with a respectable *locus*, but Comestor says nothing of the sort.

<sup>116</sup> They are not called the Ten Tribes, but simply *filii israel*.

<sup>117</sup> This is what I make of the phrase "nudi incedentes carnibus crudis et arborum fructibus vivunt" (fol. 145<sup>v</sup>, col. 2, lines 26-27).

<sup>118</sup> That is, "virtute quorum regnabit et erit monarcha potentissimus" (fol. 145<sup>v</sup>, col. 2, lines 37-38).

<sup>119</sup> Cf. the fourteenth-century *sielen trost*.

and will worship him as a god, and they will fear and respect him as their lord and king.<sup>120</sup>

The Jews are the first and foremost servants and supporters of the Antichrist.<sup>121</sup> The "enclosed Jews" are his power base, and "all the Jews" of the Diaspora become his subjects as well.<sup>122</sup> His reign is based on their support; they in turn see in him the Messiah promised them in their Law.

Espina expressly cites the blind error of the Jews as a justification for their apocalyptic destiny. Anti-Judaic religious positions, anti-Semitic literary traditions and apocalyptic expectation coalesce here to form a particularly lucid vision of Jewish participation in the destructive reign of the Antichrist. Between the moralizing, allegorizing position of "high theology" (which in this case always means Jerome and Augustine, cited in some variation) and the solidly traditional, unsophisticated encyclopedism of our vernacular texts, Espina (like Hugo Ripelin) occupies a middle ground, providing contemporary and subsequent Latinate readers of "applied theology" with what would become during the decades of especially vigorous anti-Semitic agitation that followed a popular and well-harmonized guidebook to the "Jewish peril" in the Last Days. It seems superfluous to mention the anti-Jewish atmosphere in Spain toward the end of the fifteenth century, the immediate context of the *Fortalicium fidei*.

Contemporary examples from other and more popular genres are readily available; a few really choice ones from the most effective propaganda machine of the Middle Ages, the drama, will suffice.<sup>123</sup> The Künzelsau Corpus Christi

<sup>120</sup> Fol. 145<sup>v</sup>, col. 2, line 38-fol. 146<sup>r</sup>, col. 1, line 2.

<sup>121</sup> The *Compendium de vita antichristi*, published anonymously in 1475, contains the same detail: "Concerning the cult of the Antichrist there are four points. The first is that in order to attract the Jews to himself, he calls himself the Messiah promised to them in the Law, true God and true man, and he will rebuild the temple of Solomon." (lines 5-9).

<sup>122</sup> Espina here launches into a discussion of whether the Antichrist will reign in the Temple (*in templo*) at Jerusalem, as some or rather, "some others" say, or whether he will reign *as* the Temple (*in templum*), i.e. the Church: such that the Antichrist will be a *falsus christianus* and claim to be a man of the Church. Here is a thread that can be spun into a yarn like that concerning the "Papal Antichrist" so favoured by Luther.

<sup>123</sup> The latest and most extensive treatment of this subject from the relatively narrow perspective of literary history is Edith Wenzel's *Habilitationsschrift*, "*Do worden die Judden alle geschant.*" *Rolle und Funktion der Juden in spätmittelalterlichen Spielen* (Munich: Fink, 1992; = *Forschungen zur Geschichte der älteren Literatur* 14); see also the detailed and at times pointed critique in Winfried Frey's review, in: *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* vol. 231 (1994) 2, 401-408. Frey argues persuasively that anti-Semitic tendencies (though not of the modern variety) appear very early in vernacular German plays side-by-side (as is often the case today) with religiously-motivated anti-Judaic content (402ff.), and that the anti-Semitic intentions of various plays throughout the centuries must be read against the background of specific economic and social circumstances. As it happens, in the cases of Frankfurt in 1349 and Nuremberg in 1499, the economic and social elite rid itself of the Jewish minority for reasons both financial and religio-political (403-404).

cycle (c. 1479) displays prominently the demonic character of the Antichrist (when he is born, a devil informs Lucifer that "our comrade" is born), and emphasizes Antichrist's Jewish support. The Jews become his most faithful adherents after *Archisinagoga* identifies him as the Messiah and asks that he take revenge against the Christians on behalf of the Jews.<sup>124</sup>

In Hans Folz' late fifteenth-century *Ein Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund*<sup>125</sup> and Pamphilus Gengenbach's *Der Nollhart* (1517),<sup>126</sup> two vernacular plays not associated with particular religious holidays, the Antichrist is depicted as the Jewish Messiah or at least the Jews believe that the Antichrist, when he appears, is the Messiah they have been waiting for. Of this venomous and highly revealing pair of plays, the former is by far the more savage in content and tone.<sup>127</sup> Not the real Antichrist, but an impostor put up to the job by some rabbis appears at the court of the Duke of Burgundy, demanding that all Christians pay homage to him and hand over worldly power (authority, lordship and government)<sup>128</sup> to the Jews. This pitiful ruse is discovered and mocked by the Christian characters, especially the violent Fool. After the "false Messiah" or *Endcrist* is revealed as an impostor, he explains that the reason for this desperate deceit was that the Jews had been expecting the Messiah to come and save them for fourteen hundred years; since he still had not arrived, they decided to hurry things along. The Jews are then tortured in an unspeakably savage and degrading fashion. The play ends with the men of the Duke dancing with glee around the mutilated corpses of the Jews.

<sup>124</sup> This work "particularly plays up Antichrist's devilish connections and his close association with the Jews": Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 165. See Peter Liebenow, ed., *Das Künzelsauer Fronleichnamspiel* (Berlin, 1969), lines 5075-5304.

<sup>125</sup> A. von Keller, ed. *Fastnachtsspiele aus dem fünfzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. I (Stuttgart, 1853; = BLVS, 28; reprint 1965), 169-190. For an English translation of a few passages, see Gow, *The Red Jews*, 372-376. Folz (1450-1515), a barber, *Meistersinger*, writer of carnival plays and a thorough-going Jew-hater, dedicated this coarse work to the "Duke of Burgundy" since 1482, Philip the Fair (1478-1506), son of Maximilian I (1459-1519) of the house of Habsburg. According to one Folz specialist, the present work was composed between 1486 and 1494: see Hanns Fischer, "Hans Folz. Altes und Neues zur Geschichte seines Lebens und seiner Schriftten," in: *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 95 (1966), 212-236; 225. Concerning Folz and his other works, see the *Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1980), cols. 769-793, and Edith Wenzel, "Zur Judenproblematik bei Hans Folz," in: *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 101 (1982), 79-104.

<sup>126</sup> An extract from this play and an English translation can be found in Gow, *The Red Jews*, 377-381; Basel, 1517; Wolfenbüttel 263 Quod. A modern edition has been prepared by V. Uffer, *Der Nollhart* (Stuttgart & Bern, 1982; = Schweizer Texte, 1).

<sup>127</sup> Trachtenberg discusses this play briefly, then generalizes concerning the Antichrist plays: "the effect of these plays upon the passions of the mob may be gauged from the action of the Frankfurt City Council, in 1469, establishing special regulations for the protection of the Jewish quarter during the period when the play was being presented." *The Devil and the Jews*, 37. That the *Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund* was written after 1469 does not detract from his point.

<sup>128</sup> "Gewalt, herschaft und regiment": 171, line 30.

The *Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund* was written at the time of the strongest efforts by the Nuremberg city council to persuade Emperor Maximilian I to allow the city to expel the Jews. The Jews finally were expelled from Nuremberg in 1499. The city council had been bickering with the Emperor over the Jewish presence in the city since 1473, when they had decided to eject one of the largest and most prosperous Jewish communities in Europe. The Nuremberg citizen Hans Folz depicted the Messiah awaited by the Jews as the Antichrist in other works as well: between 1483 and 1488, Folz published a poem in rhyming couplets (*Reimpaardichtung*) called *Der falsche Messias*. Here, a young student seduces a Jewish maiden and makes her pregnant. To save his skin, he tricks the girl's parents into believing the awaited child is their Messiah. However, the baby turns out to be female. The student is exposed as a seducer, but the Jews are held up to ridicule as fools. This theme had been used by Caesarius of Heisterbach (c. 1180-c. 1240) in his *Dialogus miraculorum*.<sup>129</sup> Folz' work was supported by members of the Nuremberg patriciate, among whom he found an audience appreciative of his anti-Semitic tirades.<sup>130</sup> The humiliation and torments suggested in this popular carnival farce on the theme of the world turned upside-down (unsuccessfully, of course) mirror contemporary expulsions from the German towns,<sup>131</sup> Spain and Portugal. In the case of Nuremberg, the *Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund* was part of a concerted, long-term campaign on the part of the city council and ruling élite, supported by such middling citizens as Hans Folz, to rid the city of Jews. By way of comparison, it ought to be mentioned that in 1469 the Frankfurt city authorities had established special regulations for the protection of the Jewish quarter while (similar) Lenten plays were being performed.<sup>132</sup> Mob fury clearly could be incited by such dramatic performances, and Folz' play seems to have been no exception except that it helped bring about not a pogrom, but the long-sought expulsion of Nuremberg's Jewish residents. No Jew held citizenship at Nuremberg from 1499 to 1850.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Ed. Joseph Strange, 2 vols. (Cologne, Bonn & Brussels, 1851), vol. I, 94-95. See Edith Wenzel, "Zur Judenproblematik bei Hans Folz," 79-82.

<sup>130</sup> Edith Wenzel, "Zur Judenproblematik bei Hans Folz," 102 and 104.

<sup>131</sup> See the definitive (and only!) study of this topic: Markus Wenninger, *Man bedarf keiner Juden mehr. Ursachen und Hintergründe ihrer Vertreibung aus den deutschen Reichsstädten im 15. Jahrhundert* (Vienna/Cologne/Graz, 1981).

<sup>132</sup> Preuß, *Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist*, 29, note 1.

<sup>133</sup> See Markus Wenninger, *Man bedarf keiner Juden mehr. Ursachen und Hintergründe ihrer Vertreibung aus den deutschen Reichsstädten im 15. Jahrhundert* (Vienna-Cologne-Graz, 1981), 135-154. Wenninger proposes a novel theory that accounts for the expulsions of Jews from so many imperial cities under such different circumstances (e.g., during both booms and busts) with a pan-European theory of economic development that frees local and territorial economies from the need for Jewish credit (after a certain stage has been reached). The spread of this more stable, self-sufficient economy seems to have progressed from western to central Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, then from western and southern Germany toward the north



In *Der Nollhart*, a friar and a Jew dispute the issue of the Messiah. The friar insists that Jesus was the Messiah, citing the usual Biblical *loci*, then at the request of the Jew, describes the Antichrist. The device used is a version of the comedic confusion of persons: the Jew thinks that the Christian means by "Antichrist" the Jewish Messiah; the Christian thinks the Jew means by "Messiah" the Antichrist of Christian lore. In fact, the Christian author imputes to the Jews the absurd (but among Christians, long-standing) belief that the Jewish Messiah will be the Antichrist. The Jew asks the friar to describe Antichrist (i.e., in Jewish terms, the Messiah), as the Jews have been waiting for him for fifteen hundred years, and are anxious that he arrive soon. The friar says the Antichrist will be born of the tribe of Dan, "as was Judas, who is eternally damned," then recites the by-now familiar details of his birth and early career. After the Antichrist arises, the friar explains that

Gog and Magog, whom Alexander enclosed,  
Will be let loose:  
They will cause great misery in Christendom  
And create much pain and suffering.  
And the Queen of the Amazons will also  
Come to him with many Jews<sup>134</sup>  
Who think their Messiah is on earth:  
They will be delighted indeed.  
At this time he will work many signs [wonders]  
With which he will deceive people.  
The Jew:  
O friar, say no more;  
I wish he would come tomorrow  
Because we have been waiting for him for so long.<sup>135</sup>

Although this version of the Antichrist story is less clear than, say, Alfonso de Espina, or even than the *Antichrist*-books, as to which Jews will support the Antichrist and in what order, the Antichrist is to be attended by the Queen of the Amazons and by "many Jews who think their Messiah is on earth." The Jew's response to the friar's description of the coming disaster

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and east (250), citing Raphael Straus, "The Jews in the Economic Evolution of Central Europe," in: *Jewish Social Studies* 3 (1941), 15-40; here, 33. See Edith Wenzel, "Zur Judenproblematik bei Hans Folz," 103, and Phillip N. Bebb, "Jewish Policy in Sixteenth Century Nürnberg," In: *Occasional Papers of the American Society for Reformation Research* (1977), ed. R.C. Walton, 125-136. Bebb ascribes the push to rid the city of its Jews to the rapid growth of both population and the money supply, which caused a "widening bifurcation between prices and wages. The consequent inflation produced severe economic problems for Nürnberg's council and its subjects. Thus it is likely that the city regarded the Jews as the cause of these problems and sought a remedy in expulsion." (126-127) The wave of similar expulsions at this time is not mentioned.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. the Red Jews in the *Antichrist* books.

<sup>135</sup> Fol. giii<sup>v</sup>, lines 21-34.

is meant to evoke scorn as well as fear: "I wish he would come tomorrow." This text confuses the Jewish Messiah with the Antichrist as thoroughly as the *Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund* had done in the previous generation.

Evidence from yet another genre confirms that the identification of the Antichrist as the Jewish Messiah was standard fare outside official theological circles in the later Middle Ages. The painter Hieronymus Bosch, or van Aken, (c. 1460-1516) depicted the Jewish Messiah as the Antichrist in many of his works, including the Prado Epiphany.<sup>136</sup> According to Philip, the Antichrist's Jewishness is inscribed within a rich pictorial context of traditional anti-Judaism,<sup>137</sup> based in part on a considerable Christian acquaintance with Jewish legends and folklore, that meshed with popular anti-Semitic sentiment.

In 1500, a convert from Judaism, Johannes Gratia Dei, expressed in "Christian" terms the apocalyptic messianism of his former co-religionists in order to expose their errors. He claimed that Jews understood the Biblical destroyer Gog as their Messiah in Christian terms, the Antichrist:

It is absolutely clear that this "Gog" is what Christians call the "Antichrist" the majority of you Jews follow hard on his heels in the belief that he is the Messiah whom you are vainly awaiting. . . .<sup>138</sup>

Messianic hopes were nothing new to European Jewry, nor were they confined to this period. Intense Jewish and Christian speculation concerning the final things coincided in this decisive period for Christian-Jewish relations. Each side would seem to have fed off and confirmed the other. From the early Middle Ages to the early sixteenth century, there was a fascinating coincidence of expectations concerning the Antichrist-Red Jews-Enclosed Jews (on the Christian side) and the Messiah-Ten Tribes (on the Jewish side).<sup>139</sup> Christian apocalypticism and especially the Antichrist legend must be seen both in the context of received anti-Semitic belief and in the context of Jewish messianic expectations.

<sup>136</sup> See the erudite analytical article by Lotte Brand Philip, "The Prado Epiphany by Jerome Bosch," in: *The Art Bulletin* 35 (1953), 267-293. Brand analyzes these images and their cultural referents, but fails to place their anti-Semitic content within broader apocalyptic context.

<sup>137</sup> For example, the Antichrist is chained, referring to a Jewish legend concerning the detainment of the impatient Messiah, eager to get on with the task of redeeming his people, until the appointed day (Philip, "The Prado Epiphany," 268; reference to the eleventh-century *Midrash Conen*, ed. Adolph Jellinek, Jerusalem, 1938, in *Bet ha-Midrash II*, 29ff., among other sources); an ass appears in a rotting shack itself an allegory of the "ruined" synagogue (269) as a reference to the ancient calumny that the Jews adored the head of an ass in the Temple (270).

<sup>138</sup> "... non dubitatur quin ipse [Gog] sit, quem Christiani 'Antichristum' appellant, qui a maiore parte vestrum [Jews] sequetur putantes ipsum esse Messiam, quem frustra expectatis." Cited by Heiko A. Oberman, *The Roots of Antisemitism in the Age of Renaissance and Reformation*, trans. James I. Porter (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 132 (note 81), from *Liber de confutatione hebraice secte* [Rome, 1500], fol. 78<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>139</sup> See Gow, *The Red Jews*, chapter VI.

### Conclusion

Apocalypticism and anti-Semitism were, in the high and later Middle Ages, inextricably intertwined. They may both have been rooted in the same fundamentally insecure and credulous use of Biblical and other authorities as interpretive guides to radically troubled times. The corporate interpretation of the Beast may have appealed to some learned doctors (and even some of them were unsure), but among the broad masses and their tutors, the concrete, personal view of the Antichrist as a Jew attended by Jewish henchmen was by far the more popular and influential.

Jewish Messianism fulfilled an apologetic and a polemical function vis-à-vis Christian doctrine, for expecting a Messiah implied that none had yet arrived. What better way, then, for Christians to attack the Jewish denial of Jesus' messianic credentials than to depict the Messiah awaited by the Jews as the personification of final evil? The argument then runs as follows: not only did the Jews in their "blindness" deny and kill Christ the Messiah, but, far worse, they see in the evil figure known to centuries of Christian apocalyptic as the Antichrist none other than their Saviour! Therefore, they must be in league with him and the forces of evil not a surprising conclusion if one assumes the Jews are evil in the first place. The demonization of the Jews in other spheres (e.g., concerning their appearance, rituals or supposed odour)<sup>140</sup> cannot be separated from the demonic role ascribed to the savage, "unclean" Jews in the End Time, ever since Comestor drafted them into the apocalyptic legions. Christian apocalypticism, especially in the popular realm, especially in vernacular texts, cannot be separated from an anti-Semitism rooted just as firmly in "demonizing" ethnic hatred and suspicion as in antagonism to Jewish messianic beliefs.<sup>141</sup>

In the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, not only vernacular drama, but vernacular and Latin popular exegesis associated the Jews very closely with the Antichrist as his first and foremost servants. This popular association was not new; it appeared in the work of Hugo Ripelin "*plebs iudaica specialiter adhaerebit illi*" around a century after the appearance of the Tegnsee *Antichrist*-play, which was "still" innocent of this defamatory belief, came into being. Indeed, most Latin and vernacular authors held at least from the time of Peter Comestor that Jews of some description<sup>142</sup> would play a prominent role in the onslaught of the Antichrist during the last days. At the same time, Jewish messianic hopes created an atmosphere of alert expectation among the Jewish communities of Europe. From the fifteenth century

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*; see pages 47-50 on the alleged "Jewish stench," the *foetor judaicus*.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Peter Schwartz, OP, *Der Stern Meschiach* (Esslingen: Conrad Fyner [Feyner], 1477).

<sup>142</sup> To Comestor and his imitators, the Ten Tribes.

at the latest, rumours circulated constantly among European Jews that the Ten Tribes, imagined by Jews as their liberators from Christian bondage, had crossed the Sambation and were on the march.<sup>143</sup> These rumours delighted Jews but alarmed Christians. The anti-Semitic depiction of the Jews as minions of Antichrist was in Gavin Langmuir's sense "irrational," based on no observed or observable physical phenomena, and was to that extent "chimeric"<sup>144</sup> yet it was tradition, the tales of centuries, including the immensely popular Pseudo-Methodius and Alexander materials, and Scriptural authority that made it possible for the author of *Von Gottes Zukunft* and a churchman like Hugo Ripelin to share similar ideas concerning Antichrist and the Jews. Tradition, indeed, is the factor that makes it impossible to apply Langmuir's concept "chimeria", fantasies with no possible basis in anything real, to the role of the Jews at the end of time. This role did not spring into being all at once, as the result of a psychological aberration. It developed over centuries as stories produced by hostile speculation and conflation took on the appearance of solid fact by virtue of repetition and confirmation over successive generations, each providing a new layer of "authority" for its descendents.

The closing episodes of this story, which include the *Spil von dem Herzogen von Burgund*, the expulsion of Nuremberg's Jews, and *Der Nollhart* (among many others too numerous to mention), do not point forward toward Luther's (and later, Calvin's) allegorical use of the term Antichrist to describe first the papacy, then increasingly, the Pope himself. Yet Protestant polemic cannot be entirely divorced from the late-medieval uses of the Antichrist image: he still represents a foreign enemy, the ultimate opponent of true Christendom and the image of choice to describe evil. Perhaps Luther's early hopes for the rapid conversion of Europe's Jews to the Gospel<sup>145</sup> played a role in his decision to adopt Hús' and Wyclif's exegetical-rhetorical device: if the papacy or even the Pope is the main enemy of Christendom, then the Jews are not. This is clear in Luther's 1523 pamphlet *That Jesus Christ was a born Jew*. This shift in emphasis allowed Luther to redirect a powerful weapon long used in popular texts against the Jews to attack and discredit his greatest opponent.

<sup>143</sup> Gow, *The Red Jews*, chapter IV.

<sup>144</sup> Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 274.

<sup>145</sup> See his plea for conversion based on the idea that the "purity" of the Gospel, preached without human additions and without prejudice to the secular persons of Jews, would bring about the wholesale conversion of the Jews that was to usher in the Last Days in his measured but definitely anti-Judaic pamphlet, long interpreted as philosemitic in tendency, of 1523: *Daß Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sei*, WA 11, 307-336; and Heiko A. Oberman, *The Roots of Antisemitism*, 34, 46, 71-74, 102-105.

In German-language texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the especially threatening Red Jews were among the first to be assigned to the ranks of the Antichrist. First the Jews, then the Red Jews were servants of Antichrist. The part assigned to Jews in the final drama was a "step up" in the "escalation of anti-Semitism" that included canon law restrictions, accusations of sacrilege and ritual murder, suspicions of a diabolical role in the entourage of Antichrist, expulsion and forced conversion. The re-assignment of the Jews from "conversion duty" to active service in the army of the Antichrist had occurred by the time Hugo Ripelin wrote his theological encyclopedia; it took fifty years more for the idea to start showing up in other genres, after which time it became a commonplace of anti-Semitic Christian apocalypticism. The Epistles of John contain openly anti-Judaic formulations that label unbelievers as antichrists. Scripturally justifiable hostility toward the Jews received anti-Semitic shape when popular exegesis and literature laid the basis for popular violence against Jews on the grounds of the threat they would pose to Christians as the Antichrist's soldiers.